

SERMONS

ON

Several Occasions :

PREACH'D at the

CATHEDRAL of YORK.

By *William Pearson*, L. L. D.

late Chancellor of the Diocese of
York, Arch-Deacon of *Nottingham*,
and Residentiary of the Church of
York.



L O N D O N :

Printed by R. HARBIN, for FR. HILDYARD,
Bookseller in *York* : And Sold by W. TAYLOR,
in *Pater-Noster-Row*; and J. WARD, in the
Temple. M D C C X V I I I.

SEVERAL

ON

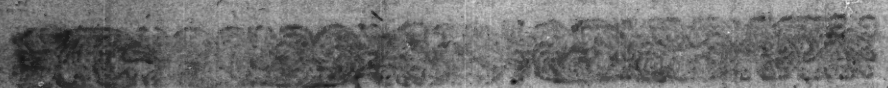
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By William Pearson, L.L.D.
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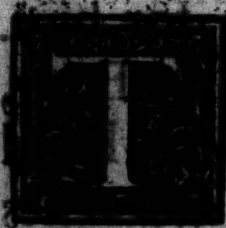
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Temple. MDCCLXXIII.



TO
*The Most Reverend Father
in GOD, William, by
Divine Providence Lord
Arch-Bishop of York,
Primate of England, and
Metropolitan; and one of
the Lords of His Majesty's
most Honourable Privy-
Council.*

May it please Your GRACE,



O receive under Your Pa-
tronage these *Discourses*,
which are some of the
Excellent Remains of a
truly great and good Man, *Dr.
William Pearson*, Your GRACE's late

The Dedication.

Chancellor, and Vicar-general, Arch-Deacon of *Nottingham*, Sub-Dean, and Canon-Residentiary of YOUR Cathedral and Metropolitcal Church of *St. Peter* in *York*. To these several Stations, some of them of the greatest Trust and Honour, he was advanc'd by two of YOUR GRACE'S Predecessors, Arch-Bishop *Lamplugh*, and Arch-Bishop *Sharp*, of Blessed Memory, who will be readily admitted by All, who had the Honour to know them, as true Judges of real Worth.

YOUR GRACE, ever since YOUR Accession to the Archiepiscopal See of *York*, has seem'd to vye with YOUR Predecessors in YOUR high Value of, and just Esteem for him. We often beheld, not with Envy, but with Pleasure, how You lov'd him; and were sorrowful Witnesses of YOUR most tender Concern for his Death. So as that All, who
have

The Dedication.

have a true Honour for his Memory, cannot but hope, that YOUR GRACE will pardon me, who here make bold to prefix YOUR LORDSHIP'S Name to these *Sermons*, the Author of which was always so highly favour'd by YOU, and which indeed had been bury'd with him, had not YOUR LORDSHIP'S Encouragement given them Hopes of new Life.

I easily perswade Myself, that the World will excuse my Presumption, in stiling these Discourses *Excellent in their Kind*, when I assure them, (a Liberty, I hope, YOUR GRACE will pardon) that there is not even one in the whole Collection, which YOUR LORDSHIP (amidst the great Variety of Business, with which YOUR High Station in the Church is daily attended) did not condescend first to peruse, approve, and encourage the Publication of.

The Dedication.

The Many, who attended to these *Discourses* with Pleasure, and, as may be hoped, with great Profit to their Immortal Souls, when deliver'd by him from the Pulpit, will, without Doubt, rejoyce at the Opportunity, here given them, of conversing with him in their Retirements, and hearing him, tho' dead, yet speaking to them in these his Remains, which discover the true Genius, and breathe forth the very Soul and Spirit of their Author. The very same devout Disposition of Mind, the same Candour, Zeal, and Strength of Reasoning, which so eminently appear'd throughout his Conversation, shine in all the *Discourses* here publish'd. So that, tho' I could not, as I here do, give the World full Assurance of their being faithfully transcrib'd from his own Manuscripts; yet All, who had the Happiness to know him, will easily

A

TO HIS EXCELLENCY

The Dedication.

easily discern, upon a serious Perusal of them, that they are his true and genuine Offspring.

It must be confess'd, that still these *Discourses* want that Exactness and full Beauty, they wou'd have appear'd in, if prepared for the Press by his own Masterly Hand. However, I hope, I may, without Suspicion of Partiality to the Memory of our Deceased Brother, venture to give these Hopes to the Readers, that, such as they are, they will be found to have that Perfection, which he wou'd have chiefly aim'd at; in that they were so admirably well adapted to do Good, and make those, who duly attend to them, wiser and better.

The Truths and Duties, here inculcated, are such, as are of most general Christian Concernment, and his *Discourses* upon them are not only solid, but pathetick; equally

The Dedication.

form'd, thro' the Divine Assistance,
for converting the Soul, as well as
convincing the Mind of his Reader.
It was his Happy Talent, to give
a singular Lustre even to the most
obvious Truths. Some of these
Sermons indeed are upon less com-
mon Subjects, and such, as, by the
natural Sweetness of his Temper, he
was the least inclin'd to, I mean
Controversial; but yet they are
such, as the growing and united
Forces of *Deism* and *Socinianism* do
render every Day more and more
necessary. In these, it may be hop'd,
will most eminently appear, many
of those Admirable Abilities, which
so justly rais'd his Character so high
with us; such as, Strength of Judge-
ment, true Reasoning, clear and
just Expression, set off with great
Meekness and Modesty. And I
trust it pleased G O D, by a Sudden
Stroke, to remove this Good Man
from

51101 A from

The Dedication.

from among us, in the Vigour of his Age; when he was most capable of doing Service to the CHURCH of CHRIST. Nothing, for some Years last past, seems to have engross'd his Thoughts and Desires so much, as the Reformation of a Vicious and Unbelieving World; and indeed, few were better qualified for that necessary and noble Undertaking. Of this, I doubt not but I cou'd perswade those, who may be yet Strangers to his Character, was I but as able, as I am sincerely willing, to set forth, in their true Light, those Amiable and Engaging Qualities of Mind, as well as those other great and useful Talents, with which the All-Wise Disposer of all good Gifts had indued him.

His great Piety towards GOD, his unaffected, but yet, fervent Devotion; the native Simplicity of his Mind and Manners; that universal

The Dedication.

versal Benevolence, that singularly kind Disposition towards Mankind, which created in him an habitual Delight in doing good Offices for Others, and added so much Sweetness and Pleasure to his Conversation; the Extensiveness of his Charity, and chearful Readiness to every good Work, joyn'd to his most exemplary Meekness and Humility, notwithstanding the many great Perfections he was Master of, drew upon him the Esteem and Love of every One who knew him. So that it may be truly said, that few Men were ever, for so many Years together, so happy as he was in a universal good Character, and never any Man, in his Station, Dy'd so universally lamented.

Such was the *Person*, whose Remains are here humbly Dedicated to YOUR LORDSHIP, in full Hopes, under the Influence of
YOUR

The Dedication.

YOUR GRACE'S Great and Just Character, they may long live and flourish, and may the more effectually promote the Glory of GOD, and the Good of the CHRISTIAN CHURCH, whose Interests our Author ever had entirely at his Heart, and for whose Service only he cou'd have been tempted to wish, that he might have liv'd to a greater Age.

May YOUR GRACE long adorn the High Station in the CHURCH, in which the Goodness and Wisdom of Divine Providence have been pleased to place YOU ; May YOU long enjoy an Uninterrupted Continuance of those many great Advantages of doing Good here upon Earth, and hereafter, receive the Reward of it in Heaven ! .81-7151.

THIS, MY LORD, is the Unanimous Wish of All, who ever had the Honour to be made known to YOU, but of no One more than
of

The Dedication.

of him, who is Truly Thankful for
the Opportunity, here given, of
publicly professing himself to be,
what, both by Duty and Inclina-
tion he most sincerely is,

YOUR GRACE'S

Most Oblig'd,

Most Humble,

And

Devoted Servant,

YORK, Jan. 7.

1717-18.

S. T.

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SERMON I.

Of the Use and Abuse of the Things of this World.



I COR. vii. 31.

And they that use this World as not abusing it, for the Fashion of this World passeth away.

THE due Regulation of humane Life; as to the Pleasures and Enjoyments of this World, being a Duty both of universal Extent and infinite Importance, and wherein all Mankind are concern'd during their Pilgrimage here below, and on which the everlasting Blessedness or Misery of
B their

their future State does chiefly depend, it can never be an improper Subject for our Meditations; much less in this Season, wherein the Church does more particularly require us to raise our Affections from the vain and transitory Things of this World, to purge and purifie our Souls from all carnal and sensual Desires, that by this temporary Abstraction of Mind from the Vanities of this Life by Fasting and Mortification, She might bring us to a Relish of the Spiritual Joys and Pleasures of the Divine Life, to a Contempt of this World, and to a diligent Searching and Aspiring after the Blessedness of that which is to come.

I shall therefore make our Conversation in this World, with Respect to the Pleasures and Enjoyments thereof, the Subject of my present Discourse, endeavouring to illustrate and enforce this Admonition of the Apostle's in my Text, that we *use this World as not abusing it, for the Fashion of this World passeth away*. And in doing this I shall take the following Method:

First, I shall consider the Nature and Origin of that great Propensity which is in our corrupt Natures to sensual and worldly Pleasures.

Secondly, I shall lay down some Rules, whereby we may judge how far that Propensity may be innocently comply'd with, and when it commences sinful; *i. e.* in what

what Sense we may be said to *use* or *abuse* *this World*.

Thirdly, I shall offer some Considerations as Motives to keep our Affections from swerving into an inordinate and sinful Love of the World, and the Enjoyments of it, and to place them on things above.

First, I am to consider the Nature and Origin of that great Propensity, which is in our corrupt Natures to sensual and worldly Pleasures.

When we consider Mankind in the Circumstances we are in, during our Abode here in this lower World, we find ourselves plac'd in a Middle State or Order of Beings, between the Angelical and Brutal Parts of the Creation; having those different Principles and Faculties that constitute them in their respective Natures, and distinguish them from each other, mixt and united together in our Frame and Constitution, *i. e.* a gross material Body inform'd with a rational Spirit; each of which hath its peculiar Propensions and Tendencies directly opposite to those of the other, conformable to the Difference of their Natures; and if they were to act separately and independently on each other, wou'd move and exercise themselves accordingly; the Body in gross material Pleasures, such as wou'd most gratifie the sensitive Nature; the Spirit in Holy and Religious Performances, in

Order to the Enjoyment of God and those inconceivable Joys which we hope to be Partakers of in our future State; each of them being carry'd on by a different Instinct congenial to their several Natures: But being to act jointly and in Concert together, they create all that Inconstancy and Unsteadiness in humane Life, raise such intestine Wars and Tumults within us, as nothing but their Dissolution can entirely put an End to. Hence it is, that we are so miserably divided in all our moral Determinations, nay, even in the very first Principles of our Nature: Self-Love and Self-Preservation, which God has impress'd upon the Nature of all animate Beings, if we hearken to the Suggestions of the Body, will prompt us to the eager Pursuit of sensual and carnal Pleasures, such as most tend to the Gratification of that lower and brutal Part of us; if to the Dictates of Reason and proper Inclinations of our Souls, they will put us upon the Practice of a holy and a vertuous Life, upon purifying ourselves, even as God is pure, that we may at last see him as he is in Glory, which is the ultimate End of our Being, and which only can perfect and consummate the Happiness of our Nature. Thus our Life seems to consist in a continual *Antiperistasis* of different Desires, of sensual and spiritual Inclinations; and as these or the other become predominant in us, we shall accordingly be happy or miserable to all Eternity:

nity: If we live after the Flesh, we shall die; but if through the Spirit we do mortifie the Deeds of the Body, we shall live. Rom. 8. 13.

Had humane Nature indeed continu'd in its primitive Perfection, there wou'd neither have been that Danger nor Difficulty, which we now experience in these Conflicts: For our first Parent, as he had a Mind perfect and upright in all its Powers and Faculties, an Understanding clear and inform'd with all necessary Truths, both Natural, Moral, and Divine, and a Will obedient to it in what it prescribed; so he had a Body also of such an happy Temperature, that it was entirely subject to the Motions and Inclinations of the Mind; so that the different Tendencies of their several Natures, like well-temper'd *Discords* in *Music*, did make up the Harmony of his Life, while both Body and Soul together mov'd regularly and uniformly in the pursuit of the common End or Happiness of their Being.

But no sooner had he eaten the forbidden Fruit, but, together with the Integrity and Rectitude of Mind, he lost that happy Temper of Body, which wou'd otherwise have been transmitted down to all his Posterity. Hence his whole Nature became deprav'd, and that exact Harmony, which consisted in a sweet Subordination of the sensitive Faculties to the Conduct of Reason, and the Consonancy of that to the Law or Will of God, was now dissolv'd, and a continual Jarring or Discord succeeded

ceeded in its Stead: The animal Life with its brutish Lusts and Passions grew heady, and rebell'd against the nobler Faculties of the Mind, which now became weak and impotent, unable to support herself against the Insults of her Enemy, and is often overcome, and made captive to sensual and bodily Affections, and has conceiv'd a positive Renitency against the spiritual Law and Will of God. From this Change in our Constitution it is, that all the Faculties of the Mind, all the intellectual and moral Dispositions of the Soul, are so much influenc'd by the Powers of the Body. We find our Parts are either bright or cloudy, sparkling and vigorous, or dark and sluggish, according to the *Crisis* of the animal Spirits, and the ebbing and flowing of the Humors of the Body. One Constitution of the Body disposes the Soul to a lively Chearfulness and Content, another makes her peevish and melancholic. The Heat of youthful Blood disposes her to hurtful and unclean Desires, and the Chilness of Old-Age, or Disorders of Sickness, sour her into Peevishness and Discontent: In a Word, every Quality of the Mind is much influenc'd and modify'd according to the Body's Constitution.

Now this Degeneracy being consider'd, 'tis no hard Matter to conceive how the Propensity to sensual and worldly Delights comes to be so universally prevalent among Mankind. For seeing the Soul is infirm of herself, and
con-

confin'd to act in Conjunction with a depraved Body, and is modify'd according to the *Crafs* and Temperament thereof; seeing she is forc'd to raise Idea's of things conformable to the Impressions they make upon the outward Senses, and those Impressions are stronger or weaker, proportionably to the Agreeableness or Disagreeableness to the Affections of the Body: 'Tis no Wonder, tho' a sad and dismal thing to consider, that so many Souls become Slaves to the Body, and sink so deep into Sense, as to relish no other Delights but such gross ones as are proper to the Body, and forget the nobler Ends for which they were created and sent down to inform their Bodies here below, to serve God in Holiness here, and enjoy him hereafter.

There are many, I hope, that by the Blessing of a vertuous Education, their own Endeavours, and the Assistance of God's Grace, have their Minds so far freed from the Tyranny of the Body, as not to be drawn by its strongest Insinuations to the Commission of what they know, and actually consider to be contrary to their Duty to God; yet if we consider the Circumstances of our first and tender Years, and the strong Prejudices we then naturally contract in Favour of sensual and bodily Pleasures, we must conclude it very difficult, above the Strength and Ability of our Nature, to attain to such a State.

For even before we come into the World, while we are in the Womb, we seem to be tinctur'd with a Propensity to sensual and worldly Delights: There is such an exact Correspondence between the Mother and the Child, that when the animal Spirits excite and set her Imagination on Work upon any Object, they move at the same Time through the same *Meanders* of the Child's Brain, and consequently give it the same Impressions, and dispose it to the same Affections that its Mother has during the Conception: And therefore seeing the Corruption of humane Nature is such, as abovesaid, that the best of Men and Women have a Tendency to earthly and sensual Enjoyments, it must needs follow, that they communicate the same to their Children; and so the Corruption has been transmitted down from our first Parent to all her Posterity.

Again, when we are come into the World, and begin to tread the Stage of it, we are likelier to improve, than to wear off those Impressions. Our Infancy and growing Age is an Age of Sense, and we seem for some Time to exert nothing beyond the Offices of mere animal Life, nor to be capable of any Pleasures, but such as tend to its Gratification; and those tender Years being the most susceptible and retentive of any Impression, 'tis a great Hazard but that we fix our Hearts so intently upon the World, before we are capable of correcting our Inclinations with mature Reasoning
and

and the Exercise of Vertue, that all the Diligence of our Lives after, will hardly reclaim and wean us from it.

And thus I have given you, I think, a full Account of that natural Propensity we have to bodily and worldly Pleasures, with the Reason and Origin of it. But before I leave this Head, I must desire you to consider likewise, that this Propensity to, or Desire of worldly Pleasures, in Order to the gratifying our Nature, is not simply and in its own Nature sinful, but only accidentally and in the Excess of it, when it passes the Bounds that God has set it: For the Desire of preserving the animal Life, and continuing it in its Well-being, was stamp'd by the Creator upon the very Essence of our Nature, and consequently must in itself be good; and if the Desire be good, certain it is, that the Actions that proceed from that Desire, as it proceeds from the Author of Nature, and tend towards those Ends to which God himself has directed them, must be so too: This is evident and demonstrable. It remains only that we be careful so to desire, and so to use the Enjoyments of this Life, that they may still continue in that Order, wherein God has appointed them, *i. e.* that the Comforts and Satisfactions of this World do not stop and terminate our Desires, but be receiv'd with Moderation, as Means to support and comfort us, while we are aspiring after the Enjoyments of a better. Which brings me to consider,

Second-

Secondly, Some Rules whereby we may judge, how far this Propensity to the Pleasures and Enjoyments of this Life may be innocently comply'd with, and when it commences sinful, *i. e.* in what Sense we may be said to *use* or *abuse* this World.

1st, A right Use of the World excludes all the Pleasures and Enjoyments thereof, that, either in their own Nature, or by Vertue of the Divine Prohibition, are sinful and unlawful. The Principle of seeking our own Continuance and Well-being, as well with Respect to the Body as the Soul, flows from the very Essence of our Nature, and was (as has been said) impress'd upon us by God himself in our Creation; and therefore to act in Conformity to it, is not only innocent, but it is our Duty so to do, and to act contrary to it (if we are capable of so doing) includes a Violation of one of the prime and fundamental Laws of the Creation. But as the Desire of our Well-being is from God, so the Means by which that End is to be acquir'd, are prescrib'd by him; and nothing that he has forbidden must be made Use of to accomplish that Desire; *i. e.* our Innocency must be the Standard of all our Pleasures, and when we cannot preserve that, we must not purchase our Satisfaction at the Expence of a Breach of any of God's Commandments, but let the Sense of our Duty to him over-rule all our inferior Desires, and so regulate the Tendencies of our animal Nature, that

it

it may never fix upon any sinful Object. St. John tells us, that *we must not love the World*, ^{1 Ep. ii. 15.} *nor the things that are in the World*; i. e. as he explains himself in the next Verse, *the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life*. And to the World, in this Sense, and the sinful Pleasures of it, the Holy Ghost tells us in many Places of Scripture, that *every true Christian is dead*: *Reckon ye yourselves to be dead* ^{Rom. vi. 11.} *indeed unto Sin*. And Gal. 6. *The World is crucified unto me, and I unto the World*. From which Expressions we learn, that every true regenerate Christian has the Inclinations of his corrupt Nature so over-rul'd by the Spirit of God, is so far transform'd into the Likeness of Christ, that his Soul becomes insensible of, and unaffected with any sinful Pleasures, and can no more wittingly and deliberately indulge himself in them, than the Body can move and exert the Functions of Life after her Separation from it. And so much for the first Rule, That the right Use of the World excludes all the sinful Pleasures and Enjoyments of it.

2dly, As for those worldly Pleasures and Delights which are in themselves lawful, our Enjoyment of them must be conformable to the Bounds and Measures that God has set us, and in the Degrees that he allows. Now these are, that we must desire and use the good things of this Life, not with the full Bent of our Mind, with Warmth and Vigour of Affection, but only with Coolness and Indiffe-

difference, that they do not engage or fix our Minds too much upon them, so as to obstruct and stifle the higher and nobler Operations of the Soul.

Under the *Jewish* Oeconomy indeed, great Indulgence was permitted to the animal Inclinations and worldly Affections of Men, and in Compliance with the strange Stupidity of that People, the greatest Incitements, wherewith God stirr'd them up to the Observance of their Religion, were the Promises of temporal Blessings and Rewards: But we are now under a more Pure and Spiritual Dispensation, and as our Saviour Christ has rais'd us unto higher Hopes, and propos'd nobler Rewards of our Obedience, even the Immortal Bliss and Glory of another Life, so our Aspirings after them must be answerable; we must endeavour, as much as we can, to free ourselves from all earthly Mindedness, to dispossess our Souls of all inordinate Love of the Creature, that we may be *rich towards God*, and fill'd with the *Fullness of him, that fills all in all*; which is the general End and Design of his holy Institution. He told his Disciples, and in them all true Professors of the same Faith, that *they were not of the World, but that he had call'd them out of the World.* Joh. 15. 9. i. e. that the Profession of the Gospel requir'd that they shou'd not any longer conform themselves to the sinful Customs and Practices of the World, that they were not to live as the rest of Mankind,

kind, immerst in sensual and worldly Delights, as if they had no higher Expectations; but having their Minds fixt upon those glorious Hopes of their Calling, and continuing in a cheerful, vigorous, and habitual Performance of those Religious Duties which he has appointed as Means to attain them, they shou'd take no Thought, nor be anxious, uneasie, and solicitous for any worldly Comfort and Conveniences, *what they shou'd eat, or, &c.* Mat. 6. 25. but to persevere in their Duty, and with Indifference to the World, and Resignation of themselves to God, put an entire Confidence in him, that while they do so, he will supply them with whatever is necessary for them here in this Life, and crown them with Glory in that which is to come. And conformable to this Doctrine of our blessed Saviour was his Example, while he was invested with our Nature: For tho' he had the Sovereignty of the World, and cou'd have amass'd up all the Pleasures and Delights of it, whatsoever cou'd any Way contribute to the Gratification of humane Nature; yet we find he was wholly unaffected with the Vanities of this Life, and on the contrary, bore a great Share in those things which we generally esteem the greatest Miseries of it, Poverty and Disgrace, Scorn and Contempt, Hunger and Want, and at last underwent a bitter and ignominious Death upon the Cross; thereby teaching us, that the Pleasures, which

result

result from the Enjoyment of the good things of this World, are not to be plac'd in the Rank of true Felicities, nor the Want of them to be accounted a real Evil; and therefore, that we ought to endeavour to bring our Minds to such an Indifferency towards them, that neither the Allurements of Prosperity, nor the Hardships of Adversity, shou'd divert us from a steady Perseverance in our Duty; and when we have done that, when we are cool and indifferent in the Enjoyments of the World, we may be satisfied that we *use* it in the Apostle's Sense, and not *abuse* it.

But, 3^{dly}, and more particularly, in the Use or Desire of the Enjoyments of this Life, we must take Care that we consider them only subordinately, as intermedial and tending to a further End of God's Appointment, and that the principal and ultimate End that we aim at in them be the Glory of God in the Salvation of our Souls. We may safely desire a comfortable Subsistence in this World, and use all honest Endeavours to procure it, because God has made it a certain Appendage to our Duty: Our heavenly Father knoweth that we have Need of Food and Rayment, and other Conveniences of Life; and if we first, *i. e.* principally and before all other things, seek the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, they will be added unto us. Godliness has the Promise of the Life that now is, and that which is to come: But that which God hath primarily and principally pro-

Matth. vi.
31. 33.

1 Tim. iv.
8.

promis'd as the Reward of an holy Life, is the Blessedness of our future State in the Enjoyment of God, and all the good things of this Life are but subservient Means and Assistances to the Attainment of it; and therefore our Affections ought to be symbolical to these Objects of them: Our first, our most intense and vigorous Desires, must be after the eternal Happiness of our Souls in another Life; and our Desire or Enjoyment of the good things of this, must be cool and moderate, and with Respect to the last and principal End. But to illustrate this by an Instance, the Pleasure that results from gratifying our Appetites in eating when hungry, is natural, and consequently good; but then we must not make it the ultimate End of our eating, but consider'd in this Subordination. The immediate End of our Eating must be to live comfortably in the Practice of our Civil and Religious Duties, and the final and ultimate End, to which both these must be aim'd and intended, must be the Glory of God; so that, as St. Paul says, *Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we may do all to the Glory*¹ of God. Not that it is absolutely necessary to intend the Glory of God actually in the eating of every Morsel of Meat, or that the Neglect thereof made every such Action sinful: No, that's not the Apostle's Meaning; this is no more necessary than for a Traveller to be always formally meditating upon the End of his Journey, every Step he advances towards it; but

but as he may divert himself by Discourse, or Observations by the Way, provided that those Diversions do not stop him from prosecuting his Journey, but that he keeps going on still and in the right Way that leads to the End of it, so while we are here in our earthly Pilgrimage, if we make the Glory of God in the Salvation of our Souls the ultimate End of all our Actions, so that that is the great and over-ruling Principle in our Life and Conversation, and that, notwithstanding, either the Allurements of Pleasure on the one Hand, or the Fear of Dangers and Difficulties on the other, we proceed steddily in the Performance of those Religious Duties, which are the Way that leads to the End of our Hopes, the heavenly *Jerusalem*; all the intervening Delights that we meet with by the Way are the Gifts of God, to enable us to go on cheerfully and vigorously in his Service, and while we use them but as Helps to an holy Life, neither to serve our Lusts, or gratifie any sinful Desire, but only to enable us to bear comfortably the Burthens of our Life and Duty, we use them *virtually* to the Glory of God, tho' we do not always *formally* intend them so, they being Means which God has ordain'd in Order to that chief and ultimate End. So that in short, we may safely and innocently enjoy the World, while the Pleasure that results from that Enjoyment is only subordinate and intermedial, and carry'd on to a further End, the Glory of God, and
our

our Enjoyment of him, and does not divert us from the Prosecution thereof.

Thus have I laid down Three Rules whereby we may judge of our Conversation as to the Use of the World; And, 1st, If it is exclusive of all the sinful Enjoyments thereof; 2^{dly}, If, in respect to those Pleasures and Delights that are lawful, it be according to those Measures and in those Degrees that God allows it, *i. e.* if it is with Coolness and Indifferency, and Resignation of ourselves to God, and without Anxiety and Sollicitude of Mind; And 3^{dly}, and lastly, If we do not make the Enjoyments of this Life our chief and ultimate End, but consider them as intermedial, and in Subordination to the Glory of God, and our Enjoyment of him hereafter, then I think we may safely conclude, that we use, and not abuse the World in the Apostle's Sense.

Thirdly, I come now to consider some Motives to aspire after such Indifferency and Moderation in the Use of the World, as is conformable to the Rules I have now laid down. And the first, and which I shall chiefly insist upon, is that which St. Paul offers in the Words immediately following my Text, *viz.*

First, *The Fashion of this World*, τὸ ἔθνος τοῦ κόσμου τούτου, the Habit, the Condition, or the present Scene of the Things of this World;

is transient and *passeth away*. These Words did primarily respect the heavy Persecution which the Apostle foresaw falling upon the Church under Nero, as he prophesied also to the *Ephesians*, *Act. 20. 29*; but they include the Condition of all worldly Enjoyments in what Circumstances soever. For tho' God do not think fit to take them from us by the Fury of a persecuting Tyrant, by Rapine, or the Violence of an Enemy; yet there are infinite unseen Accidents, which, when we think our selves most secure of them, may deprive us of them, we know not how: And upon this Account Solomon calls them, *Things that are not*. *Why wilt thou set thine Eyes upon that which is not?* For Riches certainly make themselves *Wings*, and fly like an *Eagle towards Heaven*. They are so flitting and uncertain, that there's not a Moment, but, notwithstanding our best Endeavours to secure them, they may break loose from us, and vanish out of our Sight.

Prov.
xxiii. 5.

But were they never so fixt and permanent in their own Natures, yet to us they cannot be so; for either our Opinions of them will alter, or we shall be taken from them. The Souls of Men in their present Circumstances cannot with any Complacency and Delight look into, or reflect upon themselves: For finding nothing there but a Mass of Sin, the Ruins of Reason and Innocency, this unwelcome Entertainment at home makes

makes them seek for Satisfaction abroad in the Amusement of exteriour Delights, in Pleasures and Pastimes, in the Pursuit of Riches and Honours, &c. which may steal them from themselves and the Sense of their Misery. But alas! there's no Satisfaction to be met with without our selves; all the Pleasures of this Life are but *Vanity and Vexation of Spirit*, and like *Noah's Dove*, when our Souls have flutter'd about, and survey'd all the Ocean of worldly Delights, if they wou'd have a Resting-Place, they must make towards Heaven, their native Ark, from whence they came, and where only they must expect to be happy.

When our Desires are bent upon any Thing, we are apt to promise our selves full Content and Satisfaction in the Enjoyment of it; but when we are once possess'd of it, we find our Opinions of it are soon alter'd; insomuch, that tho' the Thing it self remain, yet all that Delight and Pleasure wherewith it charm'd and bewitch'd our Affections before, vanish away, and leave Satiety and Discontent behind: And so we must run from this Enjoyment to another, and like Children who think that they can reach Heaven from some neighbouring Hill, when with Toil and Anxiety we attain it, we shall find our selves as far from Happiness and Content, as when we first began our Pursuit after it; for such is the Fan-

tasticalness, shall I call it, or Misery of humane Nature, that as we are apt always to think our present Pain the greatest, so our present Pleasure is usually the least, as the *Leeks* of *Ægypt*, when they were remov'd from them, were pleasanter to the *Israelites* than the *Manna* from Heaven.

But, *lastly*, Were the Enjoyments of this World firm and constant, and were our Appetites always the same, and our Opinions of Things unalterable by the Fruition of them, yet we must e'er long leave them: Death, which every Moment draws nearer and nearer to us, will shortly take us from them, and then we shall be sensible how we have mispent our Time in seeking after that which profiteth not. It was observ'd of some Countries, particularly the *Ægyptians*, that they built them better Tombs than Houses, because they were to continue longer in them. Were we to continue in this World for ever, and had no Prospect of another, then indeed to indulge our sensual Appetites in all the Pleasures of this Life, and yield up the Reins to our Lusts, wou'd have been to live up to the End of our Being, and the Perfection of our Nature: But, God be prais'd, however the degenerate Part of Mankind depress the Glory of their Order, by their wicked and voluptuous Lives, we are made for higher and nobler Ends, and this Life we now live in the Body is an

an inconsiderable Part of our Duration and Subsistence, which will be lengthen'd out into a vast and inconceivable Eternity, when our Souls shall have finish'd their earthly Peregrination, having put off this Tabernacle of Flesh, and being receiv'd into their everlasting Habitation, that *House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens.*

O how forcibly shou'd these Considerations work upon every Soul here among us, to make us heartily endeavour to purge our selves from all earthly Alloy, to disengage and free us from all transitory Vanities; to make Provision for this Life and the next, proportionably to our short Continuance in the one, and the Eternity of the other; and, *lastly*, to be continually Aspiring after those heavenly Joys which only can make up a lasting and adequate Happiness to our Nature, those Joys which are fixt and unchangeable; as God himself, from whence they flow, *with whom is no Variableness, nor Shadow of Changing.*

Secondly, To move us to this Duty, let us consider further, that to be indifferently affected towards the World will give us that Freedom of Mind, without which it is impossible our Life shou'd be happy. When Men are put in Mind of taking off their Hearts from the World, and letting nothing therein have such an absolute Dominion over their Affections, as to enslave them

them to itself, they are apt to start and be uneasy, as if they were about to be rifled of their Riches, and to have their Stores robb'd. Whereas, did they but see Things in a true Light, they wou'd be satisfied, that nothing more or less were offer'd them, than Freedom from the vilest and most intolerable Slavery they can be put to.

While our Hearts are chain'd to the Things of this World, *Intus & jecore in agro nascuntur Domini*, our inordinate and earthly Lusts set us always upon the Pursuit of them, and will not suffer us to possess our Souls in Quiet, or to have our Thoughts or Desires entertain'd with any Thing else. If they are in Danger, we shake and tremble for Fear; if they are impair'd, we are wounded and cut to the Heart with Grief; and if they are lost, we scarce know where we are, and cannot find our selves. Nay, the very Possibility of their miscarrying is a Pain and Torment to us. And can there, I beseech you, be a harder, a more insupportable Bondage impos'd upon us than this? Whereas, on the contrary, if we were but indifferently affected to the Things of this Life, we shou'd thereby become possess'd of the greatest Treasure we can have in this World, I mean ourselves; we shou'd always be of a quiet, sedate, resign'd, and disinterested Spirit, firm and steady in all the Mutations of the World, not blown up with Prosperity,

Prosperity, nor cast down with any calamitous Accident of Life, but cheerfully and comfortably persevere in the Observance of our Duty to God, our Neighbours, and our selves.

Thirdly, To stir us up to this Indifferency to the World, let us reflect upon the solemn Covenant we made with God to this Purpose at our Baptism, *viz.* that *we wou'd renounce all the Poms and Vanities of this wicked World*: By which is meant, all the Excess in Things relating to this Life, whether it be in the Desire or Use of them, as worldly Wealth, Greatness, and Pleasures. These we solemnly renounce, not totally, indeed, and absolutely, as if it were unlawful for us ever after to possess and enjoy either Riches, Honours, or Pleasures, (which we may certainly very safely do, while we observe those due Measures, which either by the general Rules of Sobriety, or the particular Circumstances of our Qualities or Callings, we are bound to) but thus far we promise to forsake and renounce them, that we will not set our Hearts upon them, so as to be over-careful and solicitous about them, that we will not endeavour either to get or keep them by any unlawful Means, nor use them to Excess and Extravagancy, to gratifie our vain Fancies and inordinate Appetites, nor suffer ourselves to be so taken up with Admiration of the transitory Splendour thereof,

thereof, as to prefer them in our practical Judgment before the Glory of God, and the solid and never-fading Pleasures of a better World. All this, I say, we have solemnly sworn, and taken a Sacrament upon it; and I beseech you then to consider with your selves, whether it be not the vilest Perjury, and most unreasonable in all its Circumstances, thus to run counter to the Vows and Professions we have made to God, and thereby to provoke his Wrath and Indignation against us; and for the fading Enjoyments of this Life, part with all the justifiable Hopes and Pretensions we can have to the eternal Blessedness of that which is to come; which depend wholly upon the Performance of the Covenant between God and us.

Fourthly, Fixing our Hearts upon the Things of this World will not only forfeit our Title to the Happiness of the next, but make our Souls utterly incapable of it.

Some of the ancient Heathens were of Opinion, that when Souls were separated from their Bodies, those pure and innocent Spirits, which, during their Abode in the Flesh, did not yield to the Lusts thereof, but were abstracted and wean'd from the gross Pleasures of the material World, were by their own innate Energy, and the Spirit of Nature, convey'd up into the highest Heavens, where the happy Souls of
good

good Men reside ; while those impure and sensual Spirits, that lay entranc'd in the Lusts and sinful Pleasures of this Life, and had their Affections always bent upon this World, were detain'd still, after their Separation from their Bodies, in the lower Regions of the Air, by the Force of the same *Magnetism* that drew them to the Earth before, and which now makes them incapable of that sublimer Bliss that the blessed Spirits enjoy above : Which Opinion, whether it be true or no in all its Circumstances, I shall not now examine, yet, however, this we may certainly aver, that as this Life is the Time of Probation for our future State, our Souls will be for ever what we make them in this World ; the same Habits and Dispositions of Mind that have the Predominancy in us when we leave this World, will stick to us in the next ; Death will neither alter nor destroy them. Heaven indeed will perfect those good and vertuous Dispositions which are begun in us here ; but as to our main State, there will be no Alteration: *He that is filthy will be filthy still, and he that is righteous will be righteous still, and he that is holy will be holy still.* Rev. 22. 11.

Now consider, I beseech you, to what miserable Circumstances a too violent setting our Affections on Things on the Earth will necessarily reduce us: For if the Passions

sions and Affections of our Mind continue the same in our future State, Heaven it self shou'd we be admitted to the Tryal, as we are abundantly assur'd we never shall, for nothing that is unclean and impure can ever enter there, yet suppose we were, all the Joys of that Place cou'd not make us happy: For the low earthly Appetites, which we shou'd carry hence with us, wou'd be perpetually tormenting us with their craving such gross material Enjoyments as that Place of Purity cou'd not afford; and for those spiritual Delights that entertain the blessed Inhabitants of that blisful Place, our carnal and sensualliz'd Spirits cou'd have no Relish of them, they wou'd be flat and insipid to us; and so being tormented with impatient Desires of what we cou'd not have, and not being capable of enjoying those Pleasures that Heaven affords, our Condition wou'd be unspeakably miserable to all Eternity.

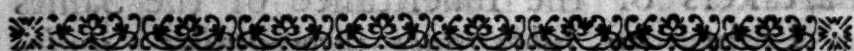
If we therefore have any Regard to our eternal Happiness, if we hope to see God and be Partakers of his Glory, let us instantly break off these Cords of Vanity that fix our Minds to the gross and sensual Pleasures of this Life, and *set our Affections on Things above*. Let us live as those that have another, and much better World in View, and are thirsting and longing after those more valuable and durable Delights,

lights, which are prepar'd for us in the Kingdom of our heavenly Father. Let us subdue every unruly Lust and inordinate Desire, and set upon a sincere, hearty, and uniform Practice of a holy and vertuous Life, proceeding from Grace to Grace, and from one Degree of Sanctification to another; so shall we be meet to be made Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, *an Inheritance incorruptible, undefil'd, and that fadeth not away, reserv'd in Heaven for us.*



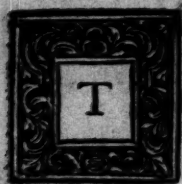
S E R

S E R M O N II.

The Christian's Duty to
abide in Christ.

I Ep. of St. JOHN ii. 28.

And now, little Children, abide in him, that when he shall appear we may have Confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his Coming.



THE general Design which the Apostle prosecutes through this Epistle, is to arm the Christian Converts against the Errors of the *Gnostic* Heretics, and to confirm them in the Belief of the divine Nature and mediatorial Office of Christ, and the Reality of his Coming in the Flesh, and to encourage them to a cheerful Perseverance in the Duties of his holy Religion; and in Pursuance thereof, he lays before them, here in the Words of my Text, a very strong and convincing

vincing Motive, drawn from the Consideration of that great and glorious Day, when our blessed Lord shall appear in the End of the World, to call us all to give an Account of, and to receive the Reward of our Behaviour here in this Life : That having the Remembrance of that glorious Appearance of our Saviour freshly and deeply impress'd upon their Minds, they might behave themselves with that Stedfastness and Patience in Well-doing, that whenever the Trumpet shou'd sound, and summon them to attend the Coming of that great King and Judge of the World, they might be in Readiness to receive him, *might have Confidence, and not be asham'd before him at his Coming.* And now, little Children, "you, who through the "Grace of God, accompanying my Labours "in the Propagation of the Gospel, have "been admitted into a new Life in Christ "Jesus, I exhort you, and require you, by "Vertue of the Authority that, as your "spiritual Father, I have over you, that you "*abide in him*, continue stedfast in the Faith "whereinto you have been baptized, and be "fruitful in all good Works, that *when he* "shall appear, both you and I may stedfastly "hope for the promis'd Reward, and *not be* "*asham'd before him at his Coming.*

In the Words we have these Three Things to be consider'd:

First,

First, A Duty enjoyn'd, to abide in Christ.

Secondly, A Doctrine suppos'd, viz. That our blessed Saviour will appear at the End and Consummation of all Things, to execute the last Part of his Kingly-Office, to judge, and to distribute Rewards and Punishments to all Mankind: And,

Thirdly, The Reason or Motive, drawn from the Consideration of that Appearance, to enforce the Observance of the Duty, that we may have Confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his Coming.

First, Of the Duty of abiding in Christ, my little Children, abide in him. Now, by this we are not to understand a bare Taking up the Name of Christ, and the Profession of his Religion, and continuing in outward and visible Communion with his Church, which being common to Unbelievers and Hypocrites, as well as the Faithful and Elect Children of God, will of itself stand us in no Stead at that Day, when the Tares and Wheat, the Just and Unjust, which are here undistinguished from each other in the Eye of the World, shall be eternally separated, and receive their respective Sentence of eternal Bliss or Misery; the Judge himself having already declar'd, that not every one that shall say unto him, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: Nay, tho' they shall say to him in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name, and in thy Name cast out

out Devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful Works? Then will he profess unto them, *I never knew you; Depart from me all ye that work Iniquity.* Such only therefore can be said to abide in Christ, as, being admitted into Covenant with God by Baptism, make it the great and constant Care of their Lives, to perform the Conditions that they have solemnly enter'd into, and engag'd themselves to observe, at the receiving that Sacrament, who have their Minds inform'd and actuated with such a lively Faith in God and Christ Jesus, as influences the whole Man, renews them in the Spirit of their Mind, mortifies and subdues in them whatsoever is disagreeable to his holy Will, and, lastly, exerts itself, in a sincere, uniform and universal Obedience to all his Commandments. For, if any Man be in Christ, says St. Paul, he is a new Creature, acted, and influenc'd by the Principles of a spiritual Life: He is not like the natural Man, divided in the moral Conduct of his Life, by his disorderly Lusts and irregular Passions, by the sinful Customs and Fashions of this World, but by the Spirit of God, making his holy Will, as it is reveal'd and manifested to him in his sacred Word, the Square and Standard of his Actions, the ruling and governing Principle in his Life and Conversation.

And whosoever has his Life and Soul influenc'd with such an active and lively Faith in Christ,

John xiv.
23.

Christ, and loves him to that Degree, that nothing can prevail with him to offend or break his Commandments, there is a kind of moral *ἐννέμεσις*, a mutual *In-dwelling* between Christ and him, he dwells and abides in Christ, and Christ in him, and *the Father*, says our Saviour, *will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our Abode with him.* And Revel. 3. 20. *Behold I stand at the Door and knock; if any Man hear my Voice, and open the Door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me. i. e.* "I expect
"and wait for your Conversion, calling upon
"you by the Suggestions of your Consciences,
"the Ministration of my Word, by my Mer-
"cies and by my Judgments, and whosoever
"will open unto me, will forsake his sinful
"Ways, and receive me into a clean and pu-
"rified Heart, I will enter into an intimate
"Communion and free Commerce of Love
"with him, and this Conversion of his shall
"be Matter of mutual Rejoycing and Festivity
"to both of us." But if any Man think to receive this glorious Guest into his Heart, he must first cast out thence all his vile Lusts and sinful Affections; he must sweep and garnish his Soul, and make it fit for his Reception; being well assured that God will never reside and make his Abode there, where so much as an unclean Thought, any one un-
mortified Lust or irregular Affection, is che-
rish'd

rish'd, inthron'd, and idoliz'd in Opposition to him.

If any of us then, my Brethren, be desirous to look into the State and Condition of our Souls, how they stand with respect to God, and wou'd know whether we abide in Christ or no, we must search and examine our Hearts, whether we have these necessary Marks and Indications of our being in him: For if, upon a serious Examination of our Hearts and Ways, we can satisfie ourselves that we are careful to perform our Parts in that Covenant of Grace which he hath made with the Father for us, and ratified with his own most precious Blood, if we give the Empire and Government of our Lives to his most holy Will, making his sacred Word the Measure and Standard of all our Actions; if we believe in him, and love him and his Religion above all the Pleasures that this World can afford us; in a Word, if we suffer no sinful Affection to remain unmortified in us, but *denying all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, live soberly and righteously and godly in this present World,* then we may be assur'd that we *abide in him*, and may rest in as sure and certain Hopes, if we continue faithful unto the End, that when these earthly Tabernacles are dissolv'd, and chang'd into a spiritual and immortal Nature at the great Day of our Lord's Appearing, we shall be carry'd up into those heavenly Habitations

D. which

which he is preparing for us, as if one of the Inhabitants of that blissful Place were now sent down to assure us, that our Names are inroll'd and registred in the Book of Life. But if, on the contrary, we find that our Lusts and Passions remain wholly unmortified in us, if the sinful Pleasures and Vanities of this World affect us more strongly than the Sense of our Duty to God, so as to be predominant, to rule and sway us in our moral Determinations; if we live either without any Sense at all of God or Religion upon our Minds, or have only such a cold, languid, and superficial one, as is not productive of inward Purity and Holiness, such as does not transform us in some good Measure into the Image of Christ, let us not deceive ourselves, for whatever we may fancy to the contrary from our continuing in outward and visible Communion with his Church, 'tis certain we do not abide in Christ, we are but as Tares among the Wheat, and if we be found in this miserable State when the Harvest, the Time of Separation shall come, our Portion shall be to be cast into the Fire that never shall be quenched; and when all the Saints and faithful Servants of God, with joyful Orations and Songs of Triumph in their Mouths, Palms of Victory in their Hands, and Crowns of Glory on their Heads, shall attend the glorious Monarch of the World to the *New Jerusalem,*

rusalem, there to reign and be unspeakably happy with him for evermore, we shall be left behind to take up our Abode among the Devils and damn'd Souls in those Regions of eternal Night, where Horror, Darknes, and Despair, Weeping and Wailing, and Gnashing of Teeth, shall be our doleful Entertainment for ever and ever.

And this may suffice to have been said of the Duty enjoyn'd in my Text, I come now to consider,

Secondly, The Doctrine there suppos'd, viz. That our Blessed Saviour will visibly appear at the End of the World in a glorious Manner to execute the last Part of his Kingly Office, in judging and distributing Rewards and Punishments to all Mankind: And in speaking to this, it will be necessary to enquire into these Two Things:

First, What Evidence and Assurance we have that he will so appear.

Secondly, What will be the Manner of it.

First, Of the Assurance we have that our Blessed Lord will so appear. He, as our Eternal High-Priest, having offer'd up himself a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice for the Sins of the World, is enter'd not into the holy Places made with Hands, which were the

Figures of the true, but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the Presence of God for us: And as the Jews, on the great Day of Expiation, waited without the Sanctuary for the High-Priest's Returning from the Holy of Holies, to receive his Blessing; so all devout and pious Christians are often lifting up their Eyes and Hearts towards that holy Place, where the great High-Priest of their Profession, the Lord Jesus, is now sitting at the Right-Hand of the Father, wishing and praying for that happy Day when he shall come forth and bless them, saying, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepar'd for you, enter you into the Joy of your Lord. And their Faith in this Particular is ground'd upon a most sure and solid Foundation; they have the Promise of Christ himself, the Testimony of Angels, and the Authority of the Holy Ghost himself speaking in the inspired Pen-men of the holy Scriptures, to build their Hopes and Expectations upon.

Our Saviour has told us, that when he left
 Joh. xiv. 3. *the World and went to his Father, he wou'd go to prepare a Place for us, that where he is, there we may be also: And when the High-Priest adjur'd him by the living God, that*
 Mat. xxvi. *he shou'd tell them whether he were the*
 63, 64. *Christ, the Son of God; he owns that he was; and tells them moreover, that they shou'd see him sitting on the Right-Hand of Power, and coming in the Clouds of Heaven, according*
 to

to the Description which he had given of his Coming to his Disciples in the 31st, and following Verses of the preceding Chapter. And since he went into Heaven, the Angels have attested the Truth of this Promise. For when the Disciples were looking after their Lord, as he ascended, and the Cloud receiv'd him out of their Sight, two of those glorious Ministers of Heaven stood by them in shining Apparel, and told them, that *that same Jesus, which was taken up from them into Heaven, shou'd so come in like Manner as they had seen him going into Heaven; i. e.* As he did locally and visibly go up into Heaven, so he shou'd locally and visibly come from thence at the last Day, and as he was receiv'd up in a Cloud, so, as he told the Jews in the fore-cited Places of St. Matthew, he shou'd come down also in the Clouds of Heaven. And by the holy Apostles we are frequently exhorted to be looking for, and as much as in us lies, *i. e.* by our Prayers and the earnest Longings and Breathings of our Souls after it, *hastning the Coming of the Day of* 2 Pet. iii. God; *looking for that blessed Hope and the glorious Appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ:* And in another Place, to Tit. ii. 13. *expect the Revelation of Jesus Christ, when to them that look for him, he shall appear the second Time unto Salvation.* And the Description St. Paul gives of that Appearance is very remarkable, 1 Thess. 4, 15. where he

says, he receiv'd *ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου*, by immediate Revelation from Christ himself, either at his first Appearing to him, or, as some Commentators conjecture, when he was caught up into Heaven. And St. *John*, in the Conclusion of his *Revelation*, when our Lord had said, *Surely I come quickly*, he answers *Amen* to the Promise, and subjoins his own Prayer, *Even so come, Lord Jesus*. And, lastly, to mention no more, Christ Jesus himself has commanded us, in our daily Prayers, to pray for the Coming of his Kingdom, that the Kingdom of Grace being consummated, and having fulfilled the Number of his Elect, he wou'd hasten the Kingdom of his Glory, the Manifestation of the righteous Judgment of God, when all the faithful Subjects of his Kingdom shall be deliver'd from Death and Sorrow, and receive the Inheritance which he has prepar'd for them from all Eternity.

And thus we see that there is sufficient Evidence and Assurance to ground a firm Belief of Christ's coming again at the last Day upon, arising from his own Promises, and from the concurrent Testimonies of Angels, and the Holy Spirit in the Writings of the Apostles. But tho' we have an infallible Certainty that he will come, yet the Time of his coming, however some too curious Spirits have endeavour'd to search it out, is not reveal'd and made known to us, and there-

therefore we must be content to be ignorant of it. *It is not for us to know*, says our Saviour, and consequently it is a great Presumption in us to determine, *the Times and the Seasons which the Father hath put into his own Power*. The Manifestations which God has made of himself and his Purposes to us, are proportion'd to the Uses and Necessity there is of their being known by us, as they tend to the End for which they were made, which was to create in us just Apprehensions of God, and make us submit ourselves to his Conduct, and not to serve and entertain our Curiosity. He has undoubtedly fix'd and determin'd the Time of his coming, and will accomplish it in *καιρὸς ἰδίος*, as the Apostle expresses it, in *its proper Seasons*: And if it had been necessary for us to know, it is no less certain that he wou'd have reveal'd it to us, and therefore let it be no Discouragement to us, that God has kept it as a Secret from us, but let us be the more careful and vigilant, waiting with Patience 'till the Time of our Deliverance shall come; that whenever it comes, whether it overtakes us while we are here on this side the Grave, as we cannot be assur'd but it may, or find us in another World, we may be fit to meet our blessed Redeemer, and to attend him into his heavenly Kingdom. I come now to speak,

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Secondly,

Secondly, Of the Manner of our Lord's Appearance. And here we must not expect a Description adequate and commensurate to the Thing itself. The Faculties and Capacities of our Souls, while they are in these Tabernacles of Clay, are not extensive enough either to comprehend, to give, or receive such a Description. It is sufficient that the Discovery which God has made of it, is answerable and proportionable to the Necessity there is of our knowing it, as it may serve to confirm our Faith, strengthen our Hopes, wean our Affections from this World, and to restrain us from all sinful and disorderly Practices; that knowing the Terrours of the Lord, we may be persuaded to prepare ourselves for his coming, *working out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling*; and this it will effectually do, if it be carefully and conscientiously consider'd, and apply'd with due Seriousness to ourselves. Now the Discovery which the Holy Ghost has given of the Manner of our Lord's coming may be consider'd in these several Steps or Gradations.

First, After the many Signs and Wonders which shall be sent, as the Forerunners of our Saviour's Coming, and the End of the World, like the *flaming Sword*, that was seen for a Year together hanging over the City *Jerusalem*, the *Voice* that was heard in the Temple by Night, and the *Armies* which
were

were frequently seen in the Air, which he sent as Prefages of his coming to destroy that City and the Politie of it; so when many Signs and Wonders shall have appear'd as Signals of the Approach of that great Day of the Lord, which however it is likely that the greatest Part of Mankind will no more understand to be such, than the *Jews* apprehended those strange Appearances to be the Fore-runners of the Destruction of their State and Nation; then shall that pompous and amazing Scene be open'd, with a mighty ^{1 Thes. iv.} *Shout, with the Voice of the Archangel, sum-* ^{16.} *moning all the Host of Heaven, Dominions, Principalities, and Powers, and by what other Names soever the several Orders of those bright Inhabitants of Heaven are distinguish'd, to attend their great Lord and King in this glorious Expedition that he is making for the compleating his Victories over all Enemies, and destroying Death, the last Enemy that shall be destroy'd: And then shall the Trumpet sound, and by the miraculous Power and Energy of that Sound, all those that are alive shall be chang'd in a Moment, and those that sleep in the Dust shall be awak'd, and arise in their glorified Bodies, and all caught up together in the Air to present themselves before the great Judge both of the Quick and of the Dead. The Voice of the Trumpet, at the Promulgation of the Law on Mount Sinai, *Exod. 19.**
made

made all the People that were in the Camp to tremble; but that was but a very faint Resemblance of this, which shall reach not to one Camp, or People only, but to the whole World; the whole Complex of Mankind shall hear it, and as many as have not sanctified the Lord God in their Hearts, and prepar'd themselves for that great and terrible Day of the Lord Jesus, in which this Sound of the Trumpet shall call and summon them all to appear, shall quake and tremble under the dreadful Apprehensions of it, they shall wish, that the Mountains wou'd fall upon them, and the Hills cover them from the Terroures of the approaching Judgment. God now speaks to them only in a soft and still Voice, in the secret and gentle Whispers of their own Consciences, and the publick Ministration of his Word; and blessed for ever shou'd they be, if they wou'd listen to it, and be obedient to the frequent Calls he thus vouchsafes them, to forsake their evil Ways, and turn unto him; but if they shut their Ears, and will not hearken unto him now, let them think of that terrible Voice, which will e'er long perhaps call them to give an Account of their Obstinacy and Disobedience.

Secondly, When we are thus rais'd, and our Souls invested with such glorious, spiritual and immortal Bodies, as shall be fit to see

see God, and converse with the spiritual World in, and when we are caught up in the Air, either by the Assistance of Angels, or through the innate Power and Energy of our new Beings, then shall we see our blessed Redeemer appear in the Glory of the Father, with his Angels, Matth. 16. 27. or as St. Luke expresses it, in his own Glory, and his Father's, and of the holy Angels, to do Justice on his Enemies, and to reward all those that with Faith and Patience in well-doing wait for his Coming. And what a surprising Joy must it needs be to every pious Soul, to see this triumphant Appearance of their glorified Saviour; to see him honour'd and acknowledg'd by all that amazing Assembly of Angels and Men, to be the universal Monarch of the World, the Lord of All; to see him rewarded for all the Affronts and Contumelies that he suffer'd in his State of Humiliation; to see that Face that was blinded, and beat, and spit upon by those insolent, insulting Wretches, shining in the unveil'd Brightness of the Deity, and that Head, which, in a cruel and contemptuous Manner, was crown'd with Thorns, now incircled with a bright and glistering Crown of Glory: In a Word, to see all his and his Church's Enemies, all the Legions of evil Spirits and evil Men, overcome and vanquish'd by him, and haled as Captives at the Wheels of his triumphant Chariot. When we read and meditate upon the History of our Saviour's Life while he

he was in the Flesh; there is none of us, I believe, but is apt to wish, that he had been one of his Disciples, to have seen his Miracles, to have heard the gracious Words that fell from his Mouth, to have accompany'd him in his Travels, and ministred to him in all his Troubles and Necessities; and if so, we cannot but earnestly long, and passionately desire to see him in this glorious and triumphant State; especially when our Love to our Saviour is heighten'd by the Consideration of the Share
 1 Ep. iii. 2. that we ourselves shall have in that Glory. *We are now the Sons of God, says St. John, and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but this we know, that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* This Consideration will make every pious Soul often break out in such pathetic Raptures, as the Holy Ghost inspir'd the Royal Psalmist with, (Psalm. 42.) *Like as the Hart desires the Water-Brooks, so longeth my Soul after thee, O God. My Soul is a-thirst for God, yea, even for the living God, when shall I come to appear before the Presence of God?* "There is nothing, O my blessed Redeemer, that strikes my Affections so powerfully, as the Contemplation of that glorious Sight, that thou wilt bless me withal at thy Appearing. The counterfeit Glories and gaudy Delights of this World, those Glow-worms that shine only in the spiritual Night that overshadows the Minds of worldly Men, do not affect me: All
 " my

“ my Covetousness is to enjoy thee, all my
“ Ambition is to be with thee, and all my
“ Care and Sollicitude is, that I may be
“ found in a Readiness to meet thee, fit and
“ prepar’d for the Blessings that thou wilt
“ bring along with thee.

As a third and last Circumstance of this glorious Appearing, the Books shall be open’d, and a final and irreversibile Sentence shall pass upon us all; and those that persevere in the true Faith of Christ, and live in Obedience to his Commandments, shall be plac’d on his Right-Hand; and those that prevaricate in their Covenant with him, that make Ship-Wreck of Faith and a good Conscience, on his Left; and *these shall go away from the Presence of the just, but terrible Judge, into everlasting Punishments, but the Righteous into Life eternal:* And while the World is consuming, and evil Men and evil Spirits are despairing and roaring under the Sense of their Misery, they shall ascend with their Saviour, and with the glorious Retinue of Angels, and all the glorified Saints and Servants of God, into his heavenly Palace, where they shall be for ever with the Lord, *singing Praises and Hallelujahs to him that sitteth on the Throne, and unto the Lamb for evermore.* And then, my Brethren, if we be of that Number, and God grant we all may, with what Joy and Transport shall we look back upon all the Mortifications and Self-Denials,

Denials, all the difficult Advances that we are now making towards that blissful State! How shall we bless our selves for the Care we are now taking to make our Calling and our Election sure! that we hearken to the Calls and Invitations that God sends us to repent and turn to him; that we strive effectually to enter in at the strait Gate, renouncing all the hidden Works of Dishonesty, and living soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present World! And while we do so, tho' Poverty, tho' Disgrace, tho' Crosses, tho' Persecutions, befall us, we need not be dismay'd; we have not many Leagues further to pass in our Voyage to Heaven, e'er all these blustering Storms and Tempests shall be blown over. Death will shortly land us on that blissful Shoar, where no Troubles or Disquietudes, nothing but Peace and Tranquility, do dwell. And when God shall please to fulfil the Number of his Elect, we shall receive the Completion and Consummation of our Happiness; we shall see, and have a full Enjoyment of God, and in him of all that can be wish'd for, or desir'd by our glorified Natures. Then shall we return to the Embraces of all our pious and vertuous Friends and Relations, and with them, and with all the Powers of Heaven, with the glorious Company of the Apostles, the goodly Fellowship of the Prophets, the noble Army of Martyrs, and the

the whole Church of God, we shall for ever praise God, and say, *Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Hosts, the Heavens are full of the Majesty of thy Glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord most high.*

And now that our Souls are upon the Mount, contemplating and viewing, tho' through a faint and imperfect Glass, the glorious Appearance of our Blessed Lord, and the triumphant State of his whole Church transform'd into the same glorious Condition with him, why shou'd not they wish, as St. Peter did at the Type of this Appearance, the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor, to pitch their Tents and dwell here? that having this delightful Prospect always in View, they may resolve never to descend any more to the low and mean Delights of this sinful World, that standing, as it were, upon the Advance-Ground of the infallible Assurance that God has given us of his Coming, and the Promises that he has made us, that we shall partake of the Glory in which he shall be reveal'd, we may overlook these few Moments; this Parenthesis of Time, that stands between us and that happy Day, and be as careful and solicitous now to be in Readiness, to have the Image of Christ, his Patience, his Meekness, his Humility, his Charity, his Resignation of himself to the Will of his Father, and all his imitable

table Perfections wrought through Grace upon our Hearts, as we shou'd be if that surprizing Scene were now ready to open and discover itself to us; lest the Bridegroom come at an Hour when we look not for him, and we shou'd be shut out from the Marriage-Feast; and while all holy and innocent Souls ascend in Triumph with their dear Redeemer into his heavenly Kingdom, we be cast into the Outer-Darkness, where will be Weeping, and Wailing, and Gnashing of Teeth for evermore. And this brings us to the Third Thing observable in my Text, *viz.*

Thirdly, The Reason wherewith the Apostle incites us to the Duty of abiding in Christ, drawn from the Consideration of his Appearance, *that when he appears, we may have Confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his Coming.*

And here I must observe to you, that tho' St. John in the preceptive or exhortative Part of my Text, addresses himself to the Christian Converts, *Little Children, abide in Christ*, yet when he comes to enforce his Exhortation with this Reason, he speaks in the first Person; he does not say that ye, but that *we* may have Confidence, &c. Now this may be consider'd, either,

First, In a restrictive and limited Sense, as respecting St. John himself, and the rest of the Apostles and Disciples, by whose Ministry the Christian Faith was first planted and propagated,

gated, together with all those who in After-Ages shou'd succeed them in the Work of the Ministry, in Preaching, and Instructing the Church of Christ; and then the Text implies as much as if he had express'd himself thus: "Now, little Children, ye that
 "through our Preaching have been brought
 "to a Belief in Christ, and live under the
 "Influence of our Ministry, let me exhort
 "and intreat you to abide stedfast in that
 "Faith, and to live as becomes your holy
 "Profession, that when our great Lord and
 "Master, in whose Name, and by whose
 "Authority we are appointed to teach and
 "instruct you, shall come, and call us to
 "give an Account of this Embassy on which
 "he has sent us unto you, we may do it with
 "Joy and Comfort, and have no Reason to
 "be asham'd of the ill Success of our Labours and Travails among you: But, as
 "we now rejoyce to see your Stedfastness and
 "Perseverance in the Faith, that our Joy
 "then may be perfected, when we see you
 "in that Day receive the Reward of your
 "Faith and patient Continuance in Well-
 "doing, an Inheritance in the heavenly
 "Kingdom prepar'd for you". To this Effect is that Expression of *St. Paul, Heb. 13. 17.* where he exhorts them to submit themselves, and hearken to the Instructions and Admonitions of those that are set over them, and watch for their Souls, *that,* says
 E he,

he, they may do it with Joy, and not with Grief, when they shall come to give an Account of the Success of their Labours in the Presence of Christ. And St. John bids the Elect Lady and her Children, look to themselves; that, says he, *we lose not those Things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full Reward.* And tho' we, who are appointed to minister to others in holy Things, have no Reason to fear, when we come to appear before the Tribunal of a just and merciful God in that Day, if we have faithfully discharg'd our own Duty, that we shall account for the Obstinacy, and Stubborness, or Insensibility of such as now shut their Ears against, and will not hearken to our Instructions: Though we need not be discourag'd, if the Success of our Labours in the Work of the Ministry for gaining Souls do not answer our Wishes and Desires; if we do not always perceive the good Seed of the Word to take Root in the Hearts of our Hearers, and prove productive of an holy Life: Because there were many wilful and obstinate Unbelievers that the Preaching even of our Lord himself had no Effect upon, that did not see, because they shut their Eyes against the Light; yet nevertheless, it will be undoubtedly no small Addition to our Joy, when

when we shall appear before our Blessed Redeemer at his Coming, to see that some have been better'd by our Ministry, and that our Endeavours have not prov'd altogether ineffectual. Nay, the Comfort and Satisfaction of finding, that by the Grace of God accompanying our Labours, we have been instrumental in bringing over, if it were but one poor Soul from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God, and making it a Member of Christ's glorious Kingdom, we shall then account a sufficient Recompence for all our Pains and Travails, for all the Contempt of our Persons, our Office, and Ministry, that we may now meet with in the midst of a crooked and perverse Generation. But,

Secondly, St. John's speaking in the first Person, that *WE* may have Confidence, &c. may be taken in a larger and more extensive Sense, as comprehending all those to whom he addresses himself, *i. e.* Christians in general: That when Christ shall appear, *We*; *i. e.* "You and I, and
"all that call themselves by his Name, may
"have Confidence, a full Assurance of that
"Eternal Life, which is promis'd to those
"that so abide in him, and not be asham'd
"before him at his Coming; *i. e.* be not
"rejected and cast off by him, to our eter-

“nal Shame and Confusion at that last great Day when he shall come to judge the World”. And here as Motives and Arguments (and very powerful ones they are) to engage us to abide in Christ, and a sincere Profession of his holy Religion, we have represented to us the different Reception and Entertainment, that good and bad Men, those that abide in Christ, and those that reject him, and cast his Laws behind them, must expect to meet with, when he appears in Glory.

First, Good Men shall have Confidence in that Day : Or, as the Apostle expresses it in another Place, [Chap. 4. of this Ep. ver. 17.] they shall have Boldness in the Day of Judgment. While they are sojourning here below in these Tabernacles of Clay, and have many powerful Enemies to encounter with, even the Powers of Darkness, and the many Frailties and Infirmities of their own corrupt Nature, the Sense of their Danger, as it obligeth them to continual Watchfulness, so it cannot choose but create in them many anxious and uneasy Thoughts. And for that Reason it is, that St. Paul, speaking of the Execution of his Apostolic Office, says, *that it was in Weakness, and in Fear, and much Trembling* : And he exhorts them, that they would *work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling*. This is the State and Condition of the best of Christians, while this Time of Tryal lasts.

1 Cor. ii. 3.

Phil. ii. 12.

lasts. They feel indeed many sweet and refreshing Comforts often arising in their Souls, from a lively Sense of God's Love, and the powerful Operation of his holy Spirit upon their Hearts; which give them some Fore-tastes of that endless Joy that waits for them in their Father's Kingdom. But at present, their Joy is mixt with Fear: These warm and bright Gleams are soon overcast and clouded, and dark and gloomy Thoughts overshadow and disturb their Souls. If a firm and stedfast Faith in the infinite Mercies and Goodness of God, and the Merits of their Redeemer, and the All-sufficiency of that Propitiation and Atonement which he hath made for Sin, make them to hope well of their everlasting Salvation; yet the daily Experience they have of their own Weakness and Frailty, tempers that Hope with Fear, and makes them apprehensive of miscarrying, and afraid, lest, after all, they may be overcome and vanquish'd by the Corruption which still remains in them, and so come short of the Glory of God. Such is the State and Condition even of the best of Men in this World: Their Life is almost a continued Struggle with the Infirmities of their Nature, and the many Temptations which they find themselves evermore expos'd to, sufficient to engage them to pass the Time of their Sojourning here in Fear. But in that last and great Day, when Christ shall appear, their

Wisd. v.

Case will be much otherwise: They will know, that their Warfare is then accomplish'd; and having no longer any Enemies to encounter with, they can have nothing to fear. Their Consciences will bear them Witness, that they have fought a good Fight, have finish'd their Course; and kept the Faith, and therefore are confident and full assur'd, that there is laid up in Store for them a Crown of Righteousness, which God the righteous Judge will then give to all those that love his Appearing. Then shall the righteous Man stand in great Boldness, before the Face of such as have afflicted him, and made no Account of his Labours; how is he number'd among the Children of God, and his Lot is among the Saints! He shall live for evermore: His Reward also is with the Lord, and the Care of him is with the most High: Therefore shall he receive a glorious Kingdom, and a beautiful Crown from the Lord's Hand: For with his Right-Hand shall he cover him, and with his Arm shall he protect him. All his Doubts, all his anxious Thoughts and perplexing Fears, are now over: He knows he shall be receiv'd with a Well done, good and faithful Servant; and that he has nothing more to do, but to receive the Kingdom prepar'd for him, and to enter into the Joy of his Lord. And when the great Judge of the World shall have pass'd this comfortable Sentence upon him, all the heavenly

venly Host of Angels and Saints in Glory shall receive him in Triumph, and with joyful Congratulations of his Happiness into their blessed Society; there to behold the Face of God, and with perpetual Praises and *Hallelujahs* to celebrate the Wisdom, and Goodness, and Power, and Glory, of him that sitteth upon the Throne, and of the Lamb for evermore. But,

Secondly, As the Sense of their Innocence, and the Assurance of their approaching Happiness will make the Righteous to be confident, and stand with Boldness before God in that Day, so on the contrary the Wicked and Ungodly *will be ashamed before him at his Coming.* Shame is the Uneasiness and Disorder that arises in a Man's Mind from the Consciousness of his having done something unworthy of himself, and unbecoming his Character; something that may forfeit his Title to the Esteem and good Opinion which he desires others shou'd have of him. And when a Sinner comes to appear in that tremendous Presence of the great Judge of the World, condemn'd by his own Conscience, and trembling with Expectation of hearing the irreversible Doom pass upon him; certainly the Sense of his Folly, in bartering away his Soul, his

E 4 Heaven,

Heaven, his All, for the trifling Pleasures and Enjoyments of this Life, and the Reflections his awaken'd Conscience will make in that Day upon his Ingratitude, his idle and unworthy Behaviour towards God, after all the undeserv'd Mercies he had receiv'd from him, will raise this Passion of Shame in him to the highest Pitch imaginable. At present, perhaps, his harden'd and impenitent Heart can reflect upon those Things, his Contempt of God and his Laws, and the Ruin and Destruction he is thereby bringing down upon his own Head, without much Disturbance; the Devil and his own brutal Lusts having cast such a thick Mist before his Eyes, that he cannot see the Deformity of his Soul, and the wretched and miserable Condition he is in. But when Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shall appear in Glory, this Mist shall vanish away; and all the Wickedness of his past Life will then be expos'd and laid open to the Reproofs and Self-Condensation of his own Mind, to God, Angels, and Men; and all that amazing Assembly that shall attend the great Monarch of the World, to celebrate the Triumphs of that Day. With what Shame and Confusion of Face shall the trembling Wretch then stand before that dreadful Tribunal, and hear his whole wicked Life ript up, all his open and
secret

secret Impieties laid open, all his Brutality, his Uncleaness, his Intemperance, his Frauds and Oppressions, his Contempt of God, and Injuries to his Neighbour, &c. which his Hypocrisy, perhaps, have skreen'd from the Discovery of the World at present, expos'd and discover'd, with all their aggravating Circumstances, to Angels and Men; his own guilty Conscience at the same Time confessing and attesting to the Truth of his Charge. The Despair, and Anguish of Soul, that shall seize upon all such ungodly Wretches in that Day, *when they shall call to the Moun-* Luk. xxiii.
tains, to fall on them, and to the Hills, to ^{30.}
cover them. As it surpasses our Comprehension at present, so God Almighty of his Mercy grant, that none of us may ever know it by our own sad and woeful Experience; but that, through the Power of his Grace, we may so abide in Christ, and in the sincere Profession and Practice of his most holy Religion, that we may *have Confidence in that Day, and not be*
asham'd before him at his Coming.

S E R E

SERMON III.

Of the Sin of Evil-Speaking, and its pernicious Effects.

JAMES IV. II.

*Speak not Evil one of another,
Brethren.*

Purity, or a right Frame and Temper of Mind towards God, and Charity, or a right Disposition of Soul towards our Neighbour, exerting and manifesting themselves on all proper Occasions, in Actions suitable to such Principles, are a Summary of the whole Duty of Man, the Result of those two great Commandments, *on which*, our Saviour tells us, *hang all the Law and the Prophets*. And tho' being conversant about different Objects, they are distinguishable from each other; and tho' the Love of our

our Neighbour is a Duty of an inferiour Nature, subordinate to, and to be regulated by the Love of God, yet there is such a natural and inseparable Connexion between them, that they cannot subsist asunder. No Man can be sincerely pious, *i. e.* truly love God, and manifest that Love in a conscientious Discharge of all those Obligations which it lays upon him, but he must, at the same Time, so far partake of the Nature of that infinitely good and merciful Being, as to be kind, and charitable, and beneficent towards his Brethren; And if, on the contrary, any Man saith, I love God, and hateth his Brother, St. John tells us plainly, he is a Lyar; for he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this Commandment have we from him, that he that loveth God, love his Brother also. 1 John 4. 20.

Now, certainly, those Things which God hath thus joyn'd together, Man shou'd not put asunder. And yet, God knows! 'tis too evident to any that observes and considers the Way of the World, that there are many Christians, who seem to make some Conscience of the one, and yet express little, or no Regard for the other; many, who wou'd be thought to love, and stand upon good Terms with God

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Almighty, and to be much under the Power and Influence of Religion, and yet make no Scruple of violating the Laws of Christian Charity, especially in this Point of Evil-speaking, which is so expressly forbidden in the Words of my Text: For the Truth whereof, I think, I may safely appeal to the Experience and Observation of all that hear me, whether Censuring, and Backbiting, and Sporting themselves with the either real or pretended Faults or Infirmities of other Men; is not, now a-days, become the chief, and, to many, the most diverting Part of the Entertainment in most Conversations: Whether, in almost every Company they come in, they do not find a Sort of Judicature erected, where the good Name or Reputation of some or other of their Brethren is arraign'd, and subjected to such an arbitrary Sentence, as those, who are both the Judges, Accusers, and Witnesses, are pleas'd to pass upon it. This, to the vitiated Palates of most Men, is that which seasons, and gives a Relish to Conversation: 'Tis flat, and insipid, and will hardly go down without it. And he that can garnish and set off his Calumny and Evil-speaking the most artificially, *i. e.* with the greatest Picquancy and Pointedness of Wit; or, for Want of that, with the sharpest Rancour and Malice, is usually not

not only heard with Patience, but hugg'd and applauded, as the Genius and Life of the Company.

But, my Brethren, how common, and fashionable soever this Vice may be, and how favourable an Opinion soever some Persons, upon that Account, may entertain of it, as an harmless, inoffensive Way of passing their Time; yet, sure I am, there is nothing more directly opposite to the true Temper and Spirit of the Gospel of Christ, nothing more destructive of the Peace of Society, nothing that has contributed more to the souring Mens Tempers, and alienating their Hearts and Affections from each other, and to the creating, fomenting, and keeping up the unhappy Differences and Misunderstandings that are among us at this Day, than the unchristian Liberty which the Generality of Men allow themselves in this Point, of slandering, and traducing, and blasting the Reputation of such as differ from them in Opinion or Interest. And so long as this petulant, and pernicious Spirit prevails so universally among us, till Men can be brought to act more agreeably and consonantly to the peaceable Principles of our common Christianity; good Men may wish and pray for it, but there is little Hopes of seeing these Evils redress'd,
or

or Peace and Truth, and Righteousness revive, and flourish in our Days.

Now, the more epidemical this dangerous Distemper is, the more it behoves us to be careful to keep ourselves as free as we can from the Infection of it. And, in Order hereunto, I shall represent it to you in a threefold View, consider'd,

First, As it is in itself, and in its own Nature.

Secondly, With Relation to the evil Principles, from whence it usually takes its Rise.

Thirdly, With Respect to the ill Effects it hath, or the ill Consequences it is naturally attended with. And,

First, I shall consider this Sin of Evil-speaking, as it is in itself, and in its own Nature.

That which the Apostle more immediately and particularly refers to here in the Text, seems to be those unjust Censures, which the unbelieving *Jews*, and *Judaizing* Christians pass'd upon the Gentile Converts, upon the Account of their not conforming themselves to the Institutions of the Ceremonial Law, touching Cir-

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cumcision, and the Observation of the Feasts, and New-Moons, and Sabbaths, from which the Gospel, the Law of Liberty, had set them free; telling those rash Judges and Censurers, that their speaking Evil of or against their Brethren on that Account was, by necessary Implication, a speaking against or condemning of the Law itself, as defective and imperfect, in that it did not require the Observance of those Things which they so unnecessarily laid so great a Stress upon, and consider'd as still obligatory upon Christians, and indispensably necessary to Salvation. But we need not confine ourselves to this qualified and limited Sense of the Words, or restrain them to this particular Case, which does not much concern us; but shall consider them in a more comprehensive Acceptation, as a general Prohibition of this Sin of Evil-speaking.

Now, we are guilty of this Sin, when we raise or divulge any ill Report of our Neighbour, to the Prejudice of his good Name and Reputation; when we say any Thing of him to expose him to the ill Opinion, or Hatred, or Contempt of those that hear us; and do this, not to answer any Ends of Justice and Charity, but either out of Wantonness, for
Diver-

Diversion, and to pass away the Time, or to carry on the Designs and Interests of a Party, or to gratifie our own Passions, or the Ill-nature or Curiosity of others.

For it is not absolutely necessary to bring us under the Guilt of this Sin, as some wou'd pretend, that we always actually and formally intend the injuring our Brother when we speak Evil of him. Because some Persons having so habitually accustom'd themselves to the Practice of it, as that it is become their ordinary Way of Discourse, do often injure others without intending it, or considering that they do; and yet are no less guilty than if they did: For the Injury is the same, whether they intend it or no: And tho' their doing of it, without any such formal Intent or Design, may be some Extenuation of the Crime in some particular Case, yet it makes that vicious Habit so much the more sinful, and consequently derives the same Guilt upon them in the Main. The Case is just the same, as I take it, with that of a Drunkard, that commits some heinous Sin, as for Instance, Murder, in his Drunkenness: Tho' the Want of the Use of his Reason at that Time may, in some Measure, extenuate his Crime of Murder, yet, forasmuch as he voluntarily brought himself into those

Circum-

Circumstances, his Guilt, upon the whole, is the same, and he is subject to the same Punishment; as if he had done it wilfully, and with Deliberation. For whatever Degree of Guilt is taken off from the Effect, is superadded to, and aggravates the Sinfulness of the Cause; if the Murder is less criminal, yet the Drunkenness, which occasion'd it, is so much the more so. So little Foundation is there to support that plausible Pretence that Evil-Speakers ordinarily make Use of in this Case, to excuse their immoral and irreligious Practices.

If we will take an Estimate of this Vice from the Account which the Holy Scriptures give of it, we shall find no Sin more strictly forbidden, or branded with worse Characters than it. The Psalmist makes it an essential Part of the Character of an Upright Man, *that he backbiteth not with his Tongue, nor taketh up a Reproach against his Neighbour: And represents the Man that sitteth, and speaketh against, and slandereth his Brother, as a Person that forgets God, and liable to Destruction.* And in the New Testament, Backbiters, Revilers, and Slanderers are rank'd among the worst of Offenders, such as are *given over to a reprobate Mind, and worthy of Death; and such as shall not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.* And

Psalm. l. 19.

Rom. i.

29.

1 Cor. vi.

10.

Evil-speaking you find often joyn'd with
 Mat. xv. the blackest of Crimes; with Murthers,
 19. Adulteries, and False-Witness; and with
 1 Pet. ii. 1. Guile, and Malice, and Envy, and Hypo-
 crisy. So that how slight and trivial so-
 ever the Customariness of it may make
 this Sin appear to be to some Men; yet
 you see it is not so in God's Esteem, ex-
 press'd in his Holy Word.

Indeed, the Guilt of this Sin of Evil-
 Speaking is not always the same in all
 Cases, but admits of different Degrees,
 answerable to the Evidence we have of
 the Truth or Falshood of that which is
 the subject Matter of it; as the Evil we
 speak of others is either notoriously false,
 or uncertain, or what we know to be
 true. And yet we shall find that in all
 these Cases (a very few Instances excepted)
 it carries with it a plain Violation either
 of that Justice, or that Charity which we
 owe to our Neighbour by the Laws of
 the Gospel. For, *First*, If the Evil we
 speak of others is what we know to be
 false: If we asperse them with Crimes
 whereof we are sure they are innocent,
 we are guilty of a palpable and compli-
 cated Wickedness. We sin against God, in
 breaking a plain and express Command-
 Ephes. iv. ment, which requires us to put away Ly-
 25. ing, and to speak the Truth every Man with
 his Neighbour. We are guilty of open In-
 justice

justice towards the Persons we injure, in robbing them of what is most valuable in itself and in their own Opinion, their good Name and Reputation in the World, and all those Comforts and Advantages of Life, that perhaps, do in a great Measure depend upon it. We are unjust also to those among whom we vent and disperse these Calumnies, in deceiving them, and imposing upon their Credulity: To speak Truth being a Debt which, in such Cases, they have a Right to challenge from us, resulting from the very End and Design of God's endowing us with the Faculty of Speech. It was given, no Doubt, for the common Good and Benefit of Mankind, as a Means of keeping up a mutual and friendly Intercourse and Society in the World, by enabling us to discover our Minds, and communicate our Thoughts one to another. And therefore all have a just and common Right to require that it be employ'd only in Subserviency to those Ends; and whosoever by Lying and false Reports imposes upon another, to the Prejudice of his Neighbour, and the Breach of the Peace of Society, subverts the very Order and Design of Nature, goes about to discharge a just Debt with false and counterfeit Coin. Nay, lastly, when we do this, we are in some Measure unjust to ourselves; inasmuch as we hereby ha-

zard our own Reputation, and expose ourselves to the Censure and Shame of the World, in Case we are discover'd; which, to accustomary Lysars and Traducers of their Brethren often happens. So that you see this first Sort of Evil-Speaking, when the Subject-Matter of it is what we know to be false, is a Complication of Injustice towards God, our Neighbour and ourselves, and what all, that have any Sense of God or Religion, or even of common Decency and good Manners, will therefore be careful to avoid.

But, *Secondly*, Suppose the Evil we speak of others is doubtful, and what we are not sure, whether it be really true or false; having only some weak Surmises and Jealousies, or uncertain *Hear-says* to found our Report upon: What shall we say to this Case? Why, certainly, Evil-Speaking thus circumstantiated is highly criminal. For the Evil we report of our Neighbour upon such uncertain Grounds may be false as well as true; and to assert that for Truth, which at the same Time we doubt within ourselves, or do not know whether it be so or no, is no Doubt, to tell a Lie, even tho' the Thing shou'd be materially true. For that, as to us, is purely accidental, and no Way alters the Case: The Essence of a Lie

Lie consisting, not so much in the mere Contrariety of what we assert to what is really and logically true, as in its Contrariety to the present Sentiments and Apprehensions of our Minds, and Suggestions of our Consciences.

But, perhaps, when we speak any Thing to the Prejudice or Disadvantage of another, we do not report it as a certain Truth, but with some Restrictions or Qualifications, as only a probable Surmise or Conjecture, and do not press the Belief of it upon those we speak to. Now, this indeed may possibly clear us of the Guilt of Lying; but can never acquit us of the Imputation of Injustice and Uncharitableness towards our Neighbour: whose Reputation will be liable to be impair'd and sully'd by this Means, as effectually, as if the Thing were, and were reported as certainly true. For Mankind are generally so prevalently dispos'd to believe Ill, and receive bad Impressions of others, that the least Hint will be enough for that Purpose. And, for that Reason, what we report only as probable, or with some Hesitancy and Distrust, like a River, the further it runs the more Strength it will gather, 'till at last it passes for a current and unquestionable Truth, and carries all before it. When we have laid and set Fire to a Train

to blow up our Neighbour's Credit; it is not in our Power, if we wou'd, to stop the ill Effects of it.

In all Cases, where the Evidence we have to go upon is doubtful, or merely probable, we ought certainly to fix and determine ourselves to that Side that is morally safer, and further remov'd from Sin. And therefore, tho' we have some Probability to ground a Suspicion of some Evil of our Neighbour upon, yet we ought to be very tender of divulging it; because if we do, and it proves false, as we suppose it may, we do him a manifest, perhaps an irreparable Injury; but there can be no Harm in suppressing and concealing it. Besides, Charity which obliges us always to believe and hope the best we can of others, ought doubtless to overbalance and weigh down a slight Probability on the other Side. For a Mind charitably dispos'd will always pass a favourable Judgment on other Mens Actions; at least, it will never allow us to let our Reflections and Censures go beyond the Evidence of those Faults and Failures we charge them with. And if Men cou'd be prevail'd with to make a Conscience of this, it wou'd go a great Way towards putting a Stop to the Prevalency of this Vice of Evil-Speaking in the World. But,

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Tho' we are not allow'd to speak any Evil of others which we either know to be false, or are uncertain and doubtful whether it be true or no; yet when we are absolutely, at least, morally certain of the Truth of what we say, being convinc'd either by our own Experience, or such Testimony as is not liable to any Suspicion, perhaps, it may be presum'd, that the speaking Evil of our Brethren, may well be reconcil'd with all the Obligations both of Justice and Charity. But as to this Case, and for the Resolution of the Difficulties that may arise upon it, I desire these Four Things may be consider'd.

First, That by divulging any Thing that is ill of our Neighbour, even tho' we know it to be true, we may as really wrong him, tho' not directly, yet consequentially, and in Effect, as if it were false and uncertain. And the Reason is, because one or more particular Miscarriages in the Course of a Man's Life, cannot be thought sufficient to ground the Imputation of his being an ill Man upon: Few or none being so perfectly and uniformly good, as not to be guilty of making some false Steps at some one Time, or in some Respect or other; which nevertheless being overbalanc'd by that habitual Vertue and Goodness that shines forth in the main Te-

nure of their Lives, cannot justly divest them of the Character of good Men: And yet if we shou'd allow ourselves this Liberty of publishing every ill thing we happen to know of our Neighbour, we might thereby bring an indelible Stain upon his good Name, injuriously rob him of the Credit and Reputation he deservedly has in the World, and occasion his passing under a disadvantageous and unjust Character as long as he lives. For his Faults and Miscarriages will be apt to be kept up in the Minds and Memories, and propagated by the Tongues of Men, while all his good and commendable Qualities are sunk down and buried in Oblivion.

Secondly, We are bound not to do to others, but as we wou'd they shou'd do unto us. This is the great and fundamental Law of Justice and Equity, which God has establish'd for the Peace and Tranquillity of the World; and our Neighbour has a Right to require the Observance of it at our Hands, we injure him, we are unjust to him if we transgress it in any Instance. Now certainly, we shou'd think ourselves ill-us'd, and consider it as a plain Violation of this Law in another, if he shou'd divulge and expose us to the Shame of the World for every Miscarriage that he has discover'd in us. And therefore, our own Conscience being Judge, we ought to

to suppress and conceal what we know amiss in our Brother, rather than publish it to his Discredit, and the Prejudice of his Reputation.

Thirdly, God has ordain'd the Love we naturally have for ourselves to be the fixt and standing Measure of our Love to others, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*. And according to this Rule, as Self-love naturally prompts us to think well of ourselves, and to stand fair both in our own and other Mens Opinion of us, notwithstanding the many false Steps we cannot but be conscious to in the Conduct of our own Lives; and as we are far from taking Delight either in reporting or hearing any Thing of ourselves that may tend to our Disgrace; so this general Law of Charity obliges us to have the same tender Regard for our Neighbour, and to be as careful to cast a Veil over the Faults we discover in others, as we are to hide and conceal those that we are conscious to in ourselves. But then,

Fourthly, Let it be observ'd in the last Place, that tho' we are under a general Obligation upon these Accounts to be careful not to prejudice the good Name and Reputation of our Neighbour by revealing the Ill we know of him; yet some particular Instances may be assign'd,

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as Exceptions to this general Rule, wherein that Obligation is superseded, and the Restraint, which the Laws of Justice and Charity in ordinary Cases lay upon us, is qualified or taken off. And that is, in general, when some superiour Obligation intervenes, or some higher Ends of Justice and Charity cannot otherwise be attain'd: As for Instance,

First, We may lawfully tell the Ill we know of our Neighbour, when there is no other Way of avoiding the Shame and Scandal of it from falling upon ourselves, or some other innocent Person, who is unjustly suspected to be guilty of it.

Secondly, We may safely speak of, or discover the Faults of our Neighbour to such as we think have a great Influence over, and are more likely to prevail with him to correct and amend them than ourselves. For, by this Means, a greater Good, a more valuable Advantage is like to accrue to him, than cou'd by our Concealment of them: And therefore, we may justly presume upon his Leave and Allowance to do him such a charitable Office.

Thirdly, We may do it to the Public Magistrate; either when the Crimes we are privy to are of such a Nature, as wou'd involve us, if we conceal'd them, in the Guilt and the Punishment due to them; or when

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we are authoritatively requir'd to depose upon Oath, what we know touching the Crimes whereof he stands accused: Or, Lastly, when our private Admonitions proving ineffectual, he continues so notoriously scandalous and incorrigible in any wicked Courses, that it becomes necessary to bring him to Punishment, either for his own Reformation, or for a Terrour to others. In these Cases, I say, excepted out of the general Rule, we not only may, but ought to discover the Evil we know in our Brother, when some such good and necessary Ends of Justice, or Charity towards the Publick, our Neighbour, or ourselves are to be serv'd by it, to which our Regard and Tenderness for his Credit and Reputation must give Way. But to do it out of a malicious, revengeful, or any other base and sinister Design is an Argument of a Temper of Mind, very opposite to the meek, and pure, and peaceable Spirit of the Gospel.

And thus you have seen the Heinousness of this Sin of Evil-Speaking consider'd in itself, as it is, generally speaking, and a very few Instances excepted, a manifest Violation either of that Justice, or that Charity that we owe to our Brethren, and that whether the Subject-Matter of it be what is directly false, or

or uncertain, or even what we know to be true in Fact. But,

Secondly, The Odiousness and Heinousness of this Vice will yet further appear, if, in the next Place we trace it back to those evil and ungodly Principles from whence it usually takes its Rise, and judge of the Unwholesomeness of the Stream from the poysonous and malignant Nature of the Fountain which it flows from. And this, in the Opinion of the nicest Observers of humane Nature, is, in general, a vicious and inordinate Self-love, which branches itself out into several troublesome and unsociable Passions, that are the more immediate Causes of this Sin of Evil-Speaking, and communicates and diffuses its Malignity to them. Such are,

First, Envy, that black and fullen Passion of the Soul; that does not only distort the Mind, but disfigures the Body; raises a preternatural and distinguishing Cloud in the very Look and Countenance of him that is possess'd with it. And the proper Effect of this Passion is, that it makes a Man to fret and repine at, and to look with an evil Eye upon the Prosperity of others, to grudge and be troubled, to see them possess'd of any Thing that seems to give them any Sort of Superiority and Preeminence over him

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in any Respect. In his fantastical Esteem, their Happiness is his Misery, their Credit his Reproach: And the more they seem belov'd of God, by the Advantages they have of himself or others, either in respect of the outward Goods of Fortune, or the inward Gifts and Endowments of the Mind that God has blessed them with, the more they are his Hatred and Aversion. And therefore this Passion is naturally productive of this Sin of Evil-Speaking. The envious Man cannot but be pleas'd with, and seek to advance his own, and for the same Reason, he cannot be easy at the Credit and Reputation of another: Self-love, like a false Glass, representing them to him, as inconsistent with, and destructive of each other. And therefore he thinks that so far as he can contribute by Calumny and Slander to press down the Reputation of his Neighbour, his own must needs rise proportionably. Whereas, in Truth, the fallying the good Name, the tarnishing the Credit of others will no more contribute to the bright'ning and improving his own Character in the World, than the Scars and Deformities in another's Face, can add any real Beauty and Comeliness to his own.

Secondly, Another Source of this Vice is that which the Moralists call *Ἐπὶ χαιρεκακία*.

I wish we were as much Strangers to the Thing itself, as our Language is to the Name of it, having no Word that I know of, that fully expresses the Nature of it. But that which is meant by it is a malignant Temper of Mind, that is pleas'd and delighted with, and rejoices at the Evil that befalls our Neighbour, as, Envy repines and murmurs, and is uneasy at his Good; contrary to that noble and generous Property of Charity, which the Apostle mentions, that it *rejoiceth not in Iniquity*, is not pleas'd when a Brother is found guilty of any Thing that is ill, but *συγχαίρειν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ*, *rejoiceth in the Truth*, or congratulateth him upon the Discovery of the Truth, when he proves to be innocent of any Crime whereof he stood suspected.

The Truth is, the unregenerate Nature of Man is generally more or less tinctur'd with this pernicious Principle, apt to be more sensibly and more agreeably affected with the Evil than Good that happens to befall others. Whence it is, that, as one of the Old Poets has observ'd, a Ship, when fann'd on with soft and gentle Breezes in a soft Sea affords not half so agreeable a Prospect to one that stands secure upon the Shore, as when he sees it labouring in a Storm. And it is a common Observation, that the Wit and Fancy of most Men run
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more fluently and easily in exposing the Follies and Vices of others, than when these Talents are exercis'd in commending and embellishing the noble and vertuous Actions of great and good Men. And the Reason is, because in such Cases Self-love makes the Dangers or the Miscarriages of other Men serve, as Shadows in Painting, to help to set off a Man's own Condition to the better Advantage, to make him more sensible of his own Happiness, while he feels himself free of those Troubles or Inconveniences that he sees others expos'd to. Now, whosoever gives Way to, or indulges in himself this unhappy and unchristian Temper of Mind, so opposite to the Nature of God and the Spirit of the Gospel, 'tis morally impossible but that he shou'd fall into this Sin of Evil-Speaking: Seeing his greatest Delight and Satisfaction will consist either in seeing the Misfortunes, or in hearing and recounting the Faults and Miscarriages of his Brethren, the proper Food for his ravenous Mind to prey and gorge itself upon.

Thirdly, Another of those evil Principles or Passions that gives Rise to this Sin of Evil-Speaking is Pride; which is such an overweening Opinion of a Man's Self and his own Merit, as makes him despise and undervalue whatsoever is commendable or Praise-worthy in other Men, and obstructs that Superiority which he affects to have over them.

For,

For, as a distemper'd Spleen swells and dilates itself to the weakening and impoverishing all the other Parts of the Body, by sucking in and confining to itself all those Juices which shou'd circulate and diffuse themselves in due Proportions through the whole; so this Distemper in the Soul makes a Man consider himself as the proper Centre where all Respect and Honour ought of Right to terminate, and look upon the Esteem and Reputation that others are possess'd of as misplaced, and what they have no just Title to. And having once made this arbitrary Decision in Favour of himself, it is no Wonder if by Back-biting, and Slandering, and Evil-Speaking, he takes all Occasions to do himself Right in impairing and lessening the Credit of all that stand in his Way. This gives him an imaginary Superiority: And he presumes it will be readily taken for granted, that he himself is far above, and not to be suppos'd guilty of any of those Weaknesses, Imperfections, or Miscarriages that he takes upon him, with so much Freedom and such an Air of Authority to reprove and condemn.

Fourthly, and Lastly, This Vice sometimes derives its Original from Mens being conscious to themselves of some Miscarriages and Irregularities in the Conduct of their own Lives; from the Shame and Discredit whereof they wou'd skreen themselves, if possible: And the readiest and least expen-
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five Way that Self-Love can suggest to do this in, is to find out, and make it appear to the World, that others are in the same, or, at least, in some other Respects, as bad, or worse than themselves: Because the Faults they can thus discover in others will help to palliate, to lessen, and give a kind of Authority to their own. For if Men had no Failures or Imperfections of their own to trouble them, they wou'd not take so much Delight as they generally do in hearkening after or recounting those of other People. But the worse a Man's Circumstances are at home, the more he will be tempted to be abroad; the more Guilt he has lying upon his own Conscience, the more prying and inquisitive he will be about the Behaviour and Conduct of others; and the more Ill he can find to say of them, with the more Advantage, he thinks, and the less infamous will his own Character appear in the World: For he sets the Disgrace of others in the Scale against his own; and the greater Load he can lay upon them, the lighter and more inconsiderable will his own appear, both to his own Conscience and in the Eye of the World. Whereas, in Truth, however a Fellowship in Sin may help to keep a Sinner in Countenance at present, yet his Faults and Miscarriages are no more lessen'd by those of other Men,
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than the Torments, that attend his wicked Courses, will be lessen'd by their suffering with him in the World to come.

These are what are commonly assign'd as the chief Principles from whence the Vice of Evil-Speaking does usually take its Rise; all which, you see, are but so many different Expressions of that vicious Self-love, which prompts Men to seek and purchase their own Ease and Satisfaction, tho' at the Expence of their Innocence and the Hazard of their Eternal Salvation; and the Ignominy and Baseness of its Extraction may well be consider'd as no small Aggravation of the odious and heinous Nature of this Sin. But in Order to give you yet a fuller and more perfect Idea of it, give me Leave in the last Place,

Thirdly, To represent it to you in another View, consider'd with respect to the ill Effects and pernicious Consequences that it is naturally attended with, of which I shall only mention two or three, and that very briefly, and so conclude. And among these we may reckon,

First, The great Loss that the Person that is evil-spoken of sustains by it, i. e. of his good Name and Reputation; which how high an Esteem and Value Men usually set upon it, appears by the too frequent Instances we have of their attempting to wash off any pretended Stain or

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Asperſion caſt upon it, either with their own or the Blood of thoſe that have done them the Injury; as if Life without it were but a Burthen, and not worth the preſerving. This indeed is a Practice no Way reconcileable with the Principles either of Reason or Religion, and has nothing to ſupport it but a miſtaken Notion of Honour, that has unhappily crept into the Minds of too many Men. Yet even the very beſt of Men, however the Conſciouſneſs of their own Vertue and Integrity may enable them with Patience and Evenneſs of Mind to bear up under the unjuſt Reproaches and Scandals that a malicious Tongue may caſt upon them, do nevertheless look upon a good Name as the greateſt and moſt valuable of all the outward Comforts of Life, and the beſt Inheritance they can bequeath to their Poſterity. For a good Name, ſays Solomon, *is* Prov.xxii. *rather to be choſen than great Riches*: And *it* Eccl.vii.1. *again, it is better than precious Ointment*. It yields a ſweet and refreshing Flavour to them while they live, and it preſerves and embalms their Memory when they are dead. And yet the malicious Slanderer and Evil-Speaker, as he has it in his Power, ſo he makes but ſmall Account of robbing them of this moſt valuable Bleſſing.

Secondly, This Vice of Evil-Speaking will prove of very ill Conſequence even to thoſe

that practise it: And that, not only by exposing them to the like ill Treatment from others, and to the Hatred and Averſion even of thoſe they think to oblige and gratify by it; but chiefly, inasmuch as, by accuſtoming themſelves to ſpeak Evil of their Brethren, an uncharitable, unmerciful, and malicious Temper of Mind will inſenſibly ſteal and grow upon them. For he that takes Delight in defaming and beſpattering his Brethren, cannot well avoid taking a ſecret Pleaſure and Satisfaction in theſe Miſcarriages or Miſfortunes that admit Occaſion for his Calumny and Evil-Speaking, which is ſuch an unhappy and wretched Temper of Soul, as of all others a Chriſtian ought to be careful to keep himſelf free from, as that which defaces the Divine Image in us, renders us moſt unlike to God, and is indeed the very Portraiture of the Prince of Darkneſs drawn upon the Soul: *Satan* and *Diabolus*, i. e. the Adverſary and the Accuſer or Slanderer, being the Names that are given him in Scripture, as moſt expreſſive of the Malignity and Odiousneſs of his Nature. But,

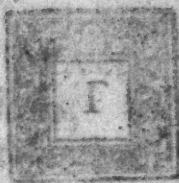
Thirdly, and Laſtly, Another ill Effect of Evil-Speaking is the pernicious Influence it has upon humane Society, in that it either creates, or, at leaſt, inflames and heightens all Miſunderſtandings, Quarrels and Contentions, private or public, that at any Time happen

happen among Men. There are six Things, Prov. vi. 16, &c. Solomon tells us, that the Lord hateth, and the seventh is an Abomination to him: And that is a Man that soweth Discord among Brethren. And in another Place; Prov. xxvi. 20, 21. Where no Wood is, there the Fire goeth out; so where there is no Tale-bearer, Strife ceaseth. As Coals are to burning Coals, and Wood to Fire, so is a contentious Man to kindle Strife. And St. James much to the same Effect, behold how great a Matter a little Fire kindleth: Jam. iii. 5, 6. And the Tongue is as Fire, and the wicked World as the Wood; as some of the ancient Versions render it, so is the Tongue among our Members, it defileth the whole Body, and setteth on Fire the whole Course of Nature, i. e. it hath this double Property of Fire, first to blacken, and then to inflame, and to set whole Societies of Men, a Church, a Kingdom, a whole World, in Combustion, being itself set on Work by the Devil, and kindled by that Fire which cometh from Hell. God knows! our own unhapyy Divisions and Distractions at this Day afford but too plain and convincing a Proof of this sad Truth: While an officious Zeal for a Party is thought by too many sufficient to supersede all the Obligations to Meekness, and Mercy, and Patience, and Long-suffering, and mutual Forbearance, that our common Christianity lays upon us; to authorize the grossest Calumnies and vilest Aspersions that Malice can

invent, or a virulent Tongue utter, their fixing opprobrious Names and odious Characters upon all such as cannot come into the same Measures with themselves, charging them with Crimes that they abominate, and Designs which they never dreamt of: As if they intended to deal with all that either in Opinion or Interest differ from them, as Nero is said to have done with the Primitive Christians, to dress them up in such Disguises as may make them pass for Bears and Beasts of Prey, in Order to expose them the more effectually to Popular Fury, and a quicker Destruction. By these Means an unhappy Ferment is kept up in Men's Minds, Religion waxes faint, and Charity languishes, our bleeding Wounds are kept open, our Misunderstandings encrease, and our Divisions are widen'd; and when and where these Misfortunes will terminate, God only knows. But since this Vice of Evil-Speaking is that which contributes so much to the feeding and blowing up this Fire of Contention among us, certainly it highly behoves all true Lovers of Peace, neither to allow it in themselves, nor to countenance and encourage it in others: But to show their Dislike and Detestation of it upon all Occasions, as the great Bane and Pest of Society. And Slanderers and Evil-Speakers are a Sort of Wasps that buz and play about only in the Sun-shine, where they meet with a kind
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and favourable Reception ; disapprove of their Ways, and they are gone. According to the Saying of Solomon, *As the North-Wind driveth away Rain, so does an angry Countenance a back-biting Tongue.* ^{Prov. xxv. 23.}

And thus, in Order to give you a true Idea of the Heinousness of this Sin of Evil-Speaking, I have here shewn how odious and detestable a Thing it is, whether we consider it in itself, or in Relation to the evil Principles from whence it takes its Rise, or with Respect to the ill Effects it has, or the ill Consequences it is naturally attended with. And in what has been said upon each of these Heads, you have had a Series of such Arguments against it, as without any further or more particular Application of them may serve, I hope, to deter every well-disposed Christian from the Practice of it, and leave a just Abhorrence of it in all our Minds: Which God grant, &c.



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S E R M O N IV.

Of the solid Pleasures and Advantages of a Religious Course of Life.

P R O V. iii. 17. *M*

*Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness,
and all her Paths are Peace.*



THIS Book of *Proverbs*, if we consider either the Excellency of the Matter contain'd in it, or the Dignity of the Author, needs nothing more to recommend it to our frequent and attentive Perusal. As for the *Matter*, it is a most compleat System of Morality, containing many exquisite Rules and Instructions for the Conduct and Regulation of humane Life, which are so adapted to

to all the various Circumstances thereof, that all Men, at all Times, and upon all Occasions, may here meet with excellent Directions what to do, and how to demean themselves in their several Relations to God, their Neighbour, and themselves, and these are deliver'd in a Way most useful and beneficial to the Reader, in such short pithy Aphorisms, as may make the best Impression upon the Mind without burthening the Memory; A Method, in which the Wisdom of the Ancients, for that Reason, thought it most proper to deliver as well all the Rites and Mysteries of their Religion, as also their Civil Laws and Constitutions.

For Truths, which in Demonstration and methodical Discourses are learn'd by a Train of Consequences, and the Knowledge of the Connexion and Dependance of one Thing upon another, as they are not so easily apprehended by all Capacities, so they are sooner forgot than those which are deliver'd in single and independant Propositions, as all Collections of Proverbial Truths are: Which are to be look'd upon and receiv'd as Conclusions drawn from the Experience and Observation of others; it being very usual with the wise Men of old, when any Thing occur'd to their Observation which might be beneficial to humane Life, to reduce it to a short Sentence or *Apothegm*, which shou'd in short, and as it were in *Miniature*,

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nature, express some useful Truth, without illustrating and enforcing it with the many Examples from which it was drawn. Such were the Sayings of *Solan*, *Bias*, and the rest of the wise Men of *Greece*, a Collection of which are the Verses of *Pythagoras* and *Phocylides*, and so is this Book of the Proverbs of *Solomon*.

I Kings
iii. 12.

As for the Author of this Book, he was a Prince of the greatest intellectual Perfections that ever mere humane Nature attain'd to on this Side the Grave. God Almighty, in Answer to a Petition which he made in a Vision by Night at *Gibeon*, having given him so wise and understanding an Heart, that as there was none like him before him, so neither shou'd any arise like unto him. And seeing, as the Apostle tells us, the Spirit is given to profit withal, he does not lay up this Talent in a Napkin, but lays it out, through the Influence and Inspiration of the Holy Ghost, to the general Use and Benefit of Mankind, by instilling into their Minds that true Knowledge which will make them happy both here and hereafter.

This was his End and Design in composing this Book: The Nine first Verses whereof are observ'd to be a Preface and Introduction to prepare Men's Minds for the Reception of those Truths which follow: And the chief Means he uses to effect this, is by rectifying Men's Notions concerning the Nature of

of Religion, illustrating the Dignity and Beauty of it, and shewing the many incomparable Advantages which attend the sincere Practice thereof. And here observing the natural Propensity, the irresistible Impulse whereby Men are carry'd on in the Prosecution of what is pleasant and agreeable to their Natures, and their Aversion to whatever seems harsh and uneasy to them, as a most effectual Means to induce them to be truly Religious, he asserts here in the Words of my Text, that besides the many other Benefits that attend Religion, expressed in the immediately preceeding and following Verses, that *she is more precious than Rubies*, and nothing can be wish'd which may justly stand in Competition with her, that *long Life, Riches and Honours*, are the Favours she dispenses to all her Votaries; besides these, I say, he here asserts, that it is not only a Thing very beneficial on these several Accounts to live godly, but very pleasant also, that the most manly, the most unmixt Satisfaction, the highest and most refin'd Delight humane Nature is capable of, is to be found in the Performance of those Acts of Vertue and Piety which Religion prescribes her Followers, *Her Ways are Ways of Pleasantness*, &c.

Now, tho' the bare Assertion and Affirmation of this Truth, to us who believe the Inspiration and Divine Authority of the Scrip-

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Scripture be a sufficient Evidence, and such as commands our Belief and Assent to it, yet seeing there is nothing more necessary, in Order to bring Men to the Practice of a holy and religious Life, than thoroughly to convince them that there is infinitely more in such a State, than in the wicked sinful Courses they pursue, I shall endeavour in my present Discourse, by several Reasons drawn from the Nature of Man and Religion, to illustrate and confirm this Position, which the Holy Ghost has here laid down, and so to enforce its Observance upon Men's Lives and Conversations.

For of all the Artifices of Satan, whereby he endeavours to obstruct the Happiness and Salvation of Mankind, there is none wherein he has prov'd more successful, than in placing Christianity in a false Light, and representing a pious and spiritual Life, conformable to the Laws and Precepts of that holy Institution, as such a sorrowful, melancholic, and disconsolate State, so debarr'd of all the Comforts and Enjoyments of this World, as is only fit for Men of crazy and distemper'd Constitutions to confine themselves to, such as the Infirmities of Age or Sickness have disabled from the Prosecution of sensual and worldly Pleasures. And if you will be pleased here to look a little into yourselves, and consult your own Hearts, you will find that
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most of your sinful Courses, your Averseness to, and Coldness in the Exercise of holy Duties, that you shut your Ears to the frequent Calls that are made you to Obedience and Newness of Life, and that your Minds are so immerst in Sense, that they disrelish all the more refin'd and manly Pleasures which Reason and Religion can afford; you will find, I say, that all these Things may be reduc'd to a tacit Belief of this false Suggestion of the Unpleasantness of a religious Course of Life. To rectifie your Minds therefore in this Particular, and thereby to influence your Practice, I shall endeavour to prove the Pleasantness of Religion, by considering it,

First, In itself, and its Agreeableness to humane Nature.

Secondly, As it promotes those Things wherein we place our greatest Pleasure in this World, and best comforts us under the Want of them.

Thirdly, With Respect to those Pleasures which are more peculiar to itself.

Consider we Religion therefore in the first Place in itself, and its Agreeableness to humane Nature.

There is no created Being in the World, but by the Eternal and Unalterable Law of the Creation is directed to the Acquisition of

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of some End, which is the Happiness, Complement, and Perfection of its Nature, according to its particular Kind or Species. And Pleasure, in such Beings as are capable of it, is nothing else but that Complacency and Delight, which result either from the Fruition of the End itself, or from using those Means which properly and directly tend to it. Thus the Good, or End, to which the vegetable Part of the World is by the universal Law of Nature directed, and which constitutes them perfect in their Order of Being, is to grow up to a State of Maturity, and continue therein to their natural Periods, with a Capacity of propagating their Species; this is the greatest Good and Perfection their Beings are capable of attaining to. The sensitive Part of the Creation have to these vegetable Powers which are common to them with Plants and Trees, the Faculties of Sense superadded, whereby they are capable of sensible Impressions of Pain or Pleasure from external Objects. Their Perfection therefore consists in the Rectitude of their Senses, and their Fitness to perform all animal Functions, and their proper Pleasure in the Enjoyment of what is agreeable to, and gratifies their sensual Appetite.

And were Mankind plac'd in the same Class of Beings, stood we on the same Level with this mute Part of the Creation, it
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wou'd be no Surprize to find the World so much captivated with sensual Pleasures, and see so many among us place their chiefest Delight and Happiness therein: Then might the Drunkard and Epicure indulge themselves in their Intemperance and Luxury, and the Adulterer in his Unclean-ness, without either Sense of Shame or Sin, as not transgressing the Law of their Nature, but acting in Conformity to the Instinct or necessary Impulse thereof.

But, however, through the Corruption of our Nature and our sinful Habits, we have defac'd it, there is a higher and nobler Principle in Man, wherein his Essence consists, and as Sense dignifies and distinguishes the brutal Nature from the vegetable, so that which exalts humane Nature above all inferior Beings, and specifically distinguishes us from them, is *Religion*, which includes both just Apprehensions of God, and acting and living conformably thereunto. For considering the wonderful Sagacity of some Brutes, and the great Analogy some of their Actions bear to Reason, I choose rather to define Man by his Religion than his Reason; *i. e.* not by Reason in its full Latitude, but by Reason as it is restrain'd to and exerts itself in the Acts of Religion, which is a Faculty peculiar to Man, there being no other Creature inferior to him capable thereof, *i. e.* of knowing and serving God here,

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here, in Order to a more full and perfect Enjoyment of him hereafter : And which also is so common to all Mankind, that there never was any Nation so barbarous where it was not in some Manner or other profess'd : And in some of the darker Places of the Heathen World, Irreligion and Prophaneness were look'd upon as the Phrensy of the Mind, and argu'd a Man out of his Senses that was guilty of them, and whosoever did not own and obey a Deity, cou'd hardly have the Honour of being esteem'd a Man.

If then Religion be that additional Excellency which God has dignify'd our Nature with, to distinguish us from Brutes, if Religion be that End, that Good, which the Eternal Law has ordain'd to be the Complement and Perfection of it, and for which God sent us into the World, it might be as reasonably expected that we shou'd find all Mankind placing their chief Business and Delight in the Practice of an holy and religious Life, and the Contemplation of the Beatitudes of their future State, as to see Brutes eat and drink to support their animal Life, and to gratifie their sensual Appetites ; and that it shou'd be no less monstrous in Nature, to see one of those Creatures live without Food and Sustenance, than to see a Man live irre-

ligiously, and with Delight and Complacency in his Wickedness.

But if Man, and only Man here below be by Nature a religious Creature, if the Knowledge of God and Obedience to his Commandments be the Character; the essential and distinguishing Character of a Man; where, I pray, in what distant Climate of the World does this noble Creature reside? where lives he, and where is the Place of his Abode? for, as for those whom we see assume this honourable Title to themselves, we see but very little of those Marks, very little Appearance of that Virtue and Holiness in them which God ordain'd them for.

All the other Parts of the visible World continue still, in an uniform and uninterrupted Obedience to the Ordinance of God, and answer the End of their Creation: The Elements have, and are known by the same Qualities they had in the Creation, the Sun enlightens us by Day, and the Moon by Night, the Trees cease not to bring forth their Fruits in their due Season, nor the Earth green Herbs for the Service of Men: But for Man himself, how is he fallen from the Glory of his Being! how has he apostatiz'd from the Law of his Creation, sully'd and defac'd the sacred Image of God, which the Creator imprinted upon his Nature! He is

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now so set and intent upon this World and the Enjoyments of it, that he cannot relish any Thing but what has Relation to it; and rarely aims at any Thing beyond it; and therefore all the Enterprizes he undertakes, all the Designs and Projects he frames in his Mind are either to obtain a freer Enjoyment of his sensual Pleasures, the Increase of his Honours and Preferments, or filling his Bags and enlarging his Estate. These are the Things that chiefly engross Mens Thoughts, while Religion is despis'd, and the Care of their Souls is neglected; as if, like Brutes, they had only the animal Life to provide for, had no Concerns beyond this material World, no Engagement upon them to fit and prepare them for Immortality.

'Tis true, indeed, while the Soul is in the Body she must submit to the natural Desires of the Flesh, and the Gratification of the sensual Appetites, in Order to the supporting that vital Union, and making it pleasant and comfortable to herself, and this Religion doth not forbid, neither is there any natural Desire in us, which we may not with Innocency and Consistence to our Christian Duty sufficiently gratify: *Our Father knoweth that we have Need of these Things*: This only we are to take Care of, that these

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Gratifications of the Necessity of our Nature be still with Subservience to the higher Concerns of our Soul, and like Refreshments which Travellers take upon the Road, not primarily or chiefly for themselves, but to help us more comfortably to attain the End of our Journey, and the Joys which are there reserv'd for us. We must not place too much Esteem upon, or caress ourselves in the Enjoyment of the Things of this World, lest by making too violent an Impression upon our Senses, they depress our Mind, and so weaken the Powers of our Souls that they become incapable of relishing any Thing else, and so we forget the End of our Being, and fall from the Glory of our Creation. But if we keep our Bodies in Obedience to the Spirit by Diligence in Prayer and frequent Mortifications, then we shall live up to the Dignity of our Nature, we shall be more delighted in the Performance of the Duties of Religion, than in all the Pleasures of this World, in praying and praising God, in the Sense of his Love and Favour, and the firm and settled Hopes of a Blessed Immortality.

From what has been said on this Head it appears, that seeing Religion is the End for which we were made, and the Perfection of our Nature, and seeing Pleasure

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is nothing but the Complacency and Delight which any Creature takes in the Enjoyment of the End of his Being, or using the Means which properly and directly tend to it, it demonstrably follows, that Religion is the most agreeable Thing to humane Nature, and her Ways most pleasant thereunto, however the Mist of Passion and ill Customs misrepresent them to the Generality of Men.

This shou'd teach us the monstrous Folly of those Men, (if it be not too much a Complement to call them so) that pride themselves in Wickedness, and in despising and ridiculing Religion; that they ought to be the Scorn and Contempt of all Men, and like the Lepers and infectious Persons among the *Jews*, be shut up from humane Conversation, where their Wickedness might neither offend nor infect others. And for ourselves, we shou'd learn hence to be zealously affected with Religion, in seriously and affectionately professing and practising it ourselves, and promoting its Honour and Esteem with others.

Secondly, I proceed now in the second Place to shew the Pleasantness of Religion, from its promoting the Things wherein Men usually take the greatest Delight, and comforting us in the Want of them. And this I shall do by considering severally,

rally, those three Things which chiefly engross Mens Affections; and above all other attract their Minds unto them, and these are Health, Riches, and Honour, and Reputation.

First, Health, This is an universal Blessing that influences, nay gives Being to all the Comforts and Pleasures of this Life. For when the Senses are disorder'd through Sickness, like the Strings of an untun'd Instrument of Music, they can receive no Impression, but what is harsh and ungrateful to them: The Eyes are not delighted with seeing, nor the Ears with hearing, the Taste is flat and unaffected with the greatest Dainties, neither is the Feeling capable of any Impressions but of Pain and Torture. I need not enlarge upon the Greatness of this Blessing, there being none but who either from the Enjoyment, or Want of it, know how much it ought to be valu'd. Now certainly, there is nothing like a Religious Life, conformable to the Laws our Blessed Saviour has given us in his most holy Institution, either to continue and improve this Blessing to those that have it, or to comfort those that labour under the Want of it.

For, if we could but be brought to observe, that Sobriety, and Moderation in

all our Enjoyments which Christianity confines us to, if we did not break the Spring of Life, in disordering our Constitutions by Excess in Luxury and Drunkenness, Physic wou'd in a great Measure become useless in the World, we shou'd not see so many drop off in the Prime of their Age, and for the insipid Frolicks of a small Part of their Youth, dwindling away all the rest of their Time in Gouts, Consumptions, or some worse Disease, consuming their Healths, and instead thereof, transmitting the Effects of their own Folly, their Weakness and Rotteness to their poor innocent Posterity, which may be a Curse to them and theirs beyond the third and fourth Generation.

But Religion, or an habitual Holiness, does not only prevent many dreadful Diseases that are the necessary Consequences of Intemperance; but does itself also directly promote and Improve Health. My Lord Bacon taxes it as a great Error among the Physicians, that when they consider of any Person's bodily Distemper, they never take Notice of, or enquire after, the *Accidentia Animi*, the Circumstances of the Patient's Mind, how it was affected before, and in the Distemper, whence, perhaps, the truest Indications and Symp-

Symptoms of the Disease might be taken. For by Reason of their vital Union, the Soul and Body mutually affect and work upon each other, and as the Body works upon the Mind by sensible Impressions, so the Soul returns her Influence by the Passions; and where these move coolly and regularly, there the Spirits and the whole Body generally do so too; but when they grow extravagant, they disorder the whole Frame of Nature, and not seldom dissolve the Union of Soul and Body by their Violence, as in the sudden Fits either of Grief or Joy. Now, seeing Religion moderates all our Passions, and keeps them within their just Bounds, it thereby directly tends to the promoting our Health: And when we want it, it comforts us by the Assurance it gives that Sickness comes not by Chance, but by Order of God's Providence, and we are to look upon it as a Fatherly Correction for our past Sins, that we may not suffer for them hereafter.

Secondly, Riches: It may seem a Paradox at first to say, that to be godly is the surest Way to be rich, at least with Relation to this World; but if we seriously consider it, there's nothing more certainly true, than that besides the reversionary Bliss Religion will procure us

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in the other World, it is the only Way to be rich even in this. 'Tis true indeed, seeing the pious and religious Christian has not such an unlimited Conscience, as will let him make Use of any Means that bring Gain and Advantage but what are just and honest; and seeing he is continually diffusing his Charity to his Saviour's poor distress'd Members, as God has enabled him: On these Accounts, perhaps, his Baggs may not swell so much, nor his Estate reach so far as the crafty and uncharitable Miser's, who, in his Haste to be rich, leaps over all the Duties and Tyes of Religion (tho' ev'n this very often happens through God's peculiar Blessing upon the religious Man's honest Endeavours) yet however, he may still be much more truly reputed rich. For to be so, does not depend upon the having any determin'd Quantity of Riches, but upon the Content and Satisfaction a Man has in the Enjoyment of what he possesses, be it never so little. For where this is wanting, be the Possessions never so considerable, the Owner can no more properly be reputed rich, than a Person thirsting in a Fever may be said to have quench'd his Thirst, while he still violently longs for more Drink. To be content with what a Man has, and not im-

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patiently to desire any more, that is to be truly rich, and this is the peculiar Effect of Religion, which teaches us Contentment in ev'ry Condition; if we are in Prosperity, it fixes our Desires and lets them not rove beyond their due Bounds, and directs us how to dispense our Abundance most beneficially for ourselves in Temperance and Charity: And if we are in a meaner State, it keeps us in a chearful Submission to God's holy Will and his infinitely good Providence, that has thus order'd it for us, proposing to us, as the Rewards of our Patience and Long-suffering, those inexhaustible and unfading Riches of the World to come.

Thirdly, Honour, and Esteem among Men. Now, to clear this Point we are to consider, that the Esteem or Value we have for any Thing, is measur'd by the Suitableness of it to the End for which it was made or design'd. As we choose not an Inn for its good Appearance without, or the Finery of the Paint, or the Device upon the Sign, but for the Conveniency of the Lodgings, the Diligence of Attendance, and the general Goodness of the Accommodation, for which such Houses are kept and frequented. Neither is a Ship valu'd from her brave Carving, or the Largeness of her Streamers, from

from her Fitness and Usefulness for the Ends of Navigation. So the Honour and Esteem we have for Men ought to take its Measure, not from any external and accidental Advantages, but from answering the End for which God created them, which I have already shew'd was Religion, and as this distinguishes them from Brutes, and gives them the Honour of being Men, so they ought to be honour'd or despis'd, accordingly as they live up to, or deviate from the Rules it prescribes.

Indeed, when Greatness is accompany'd with Vertue and Goodness, it sets them in the fairest Light, and makes them more conspicuous and exemplary to others, and so deserves of all Men the highest Respect and Veneration they can pay. But for a wicked and prophane Person, that scorns and makes a Jest of Vertue and Religion, to expect the same, only because he enjoys the Titles and Estate of his famous and vertuous Ancestors, is most unreasonable, when he has nothing else to recommend him to the Esteem of Men. Outward Respect may be due to his Character, but inward Honour and Esteem, which result from a Belief of a Man's personal Worth and Vertue, he cannot expect to meet with, 'till he betakes himself to the Practice of a sober and religious

ous Life, which is the only Thing that can entitle him to it.

Thus have I finish'd my second Head of Discourse, and shew'd briefly the Pleasantness of Religion from its promoting those three Things, wherein we take the greatest Delight. *First*, Health, in prescribing Temperance and Sobriety, and regulating the Passions. *Secondly*, Riches, in teaching us Contentment and Resignation to God's Providence, and thereby the Art of being rich in whatever Circumstances we be. And *Thirdly*, Honour, inasmuch as Religion is the true Ground of it, and the Standard by which our Esteem of Men is to be measur'd. I come now in the last Place to consider,

Thirdly, The Pleasures which more immediately and properly flow from the Practice of a religious Life. And these are of so transcendent a Nature, so far surpassing all the little transient Grati-fications of Sense, that 'till a Soul is in some good Measure freed from the Dominion of the Flesh, the Attraction and Magnetism of the animal Life, as she cannot relish, so she can frame no Idea of them. But when once she recovers her native Freedom, when she leaves Earth and earthly Things, into what

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what a vast and boundless Ocean of Delight does she immediately launch forth? What unspeakable Comforts, what ravishing Joys will flow upon her from the Sense of her Peace and Reconciliation with God? When she considers, that through the infinite Mercy of God, and the Sincerity of her own Repentance, her former Follies are forgiv'n her, and she is restor'd to the Love and Favour of the Almighty; while the Blessed Spirits above are rejoicing at it, and have the Guard and Protection of her committed to them, 'till she shall in God's appointed Time be receiv'd up into Glory, to partake of the same Blessedness with them to all Eternity.

When the Man is thus by God's Grace restor'd unto himself, free'd from the Dominion of Satan, and the powerful Influence of his own corrupt Nature, his Mind then begins to move to its proper Centre, to God the Original and Fountain of all Goodness from whence his greatest Pleasures do flow, and therefore, where his Heart and Affections will be chiefly and ultimately fix'd; I say, chiefly and ultimately, because tho' it is inconsistent with the Necessities of this mortal State, to have our Thoughts continually and solely taken up in the Contemplation of our chief End, yet
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nothing must so interfere, as to divert us in the least from the Prosecution of it, or from performing those religious Duties that lead to it. As in Traveling, tho' we have not our Minds always fixt upon the End of our Journey, but divert ourselves by Discourse, or Observations by the Way, yet we so order all these Things that we are still tending towards it, that they do not stop or divert us from moving towards the End of our Journey; tho' they may for some Time take off our Minds from actually considering it: So tho' the good Man is not, cannot be always thinking of God or the Blessedness of the future State, yet he continues still in the Way of Righteousness, in the Paths of Vertue and Piety, which will certainly bring him thither at last.

And when he does contemplate these Things, when his Mind fixes herself and dwells upon the infinite Perfections of God, and those ineffable Joys he will communicate to his Saints in Heav'n; when he meditates upon that happy Time when he shall see God in his Glory, in such a Manner as infinitely transcends our mortal Faculties to comprehend, and shall be transform'd into his Likeness, when he shall see his Blessed Redeemer come again
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in his Glory to judge the World, and when he shall be admitted into the Fellowship of Angels, Principalities and Powers, and the Spirits of departed Saints, to a State of unconceivable Happiness and unutterable Pleasures for evermore; how will these Contemplations ravish his Soul and raise her above all the gross and sensual Pleasures, all the counterfeit Glories of this World? They will make a Kind of Transfiguration of this Life, and give him a Glimpse of the Glory and Blessedness of that which is to come.

And when he comes to die, he has made Death so familiar to him by his daily Meditations upon it, that he cannot be surpriz'd at its Coming; and a good Conscience, which has been his Comfort and Support all his Life long, will be ready to fortify him against the frightful Appearance of that King of Terrors.

When he looks back upon his Life past, all his vertuous Actions, his habitual Piety, his Love and Benificence to Christ's poor and distress'd Members, his Charity to his Enemies, his Justice and Uprightness in all his Dealings, the good Example which in all these Respects he has giv'n to those he convers'd with; and in a Word, the Testimony of his
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Conscience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity he has had his Conversation in this World: These will sweeten the Thoughts of Death to him. And having nothing to disturb his Remembrance with in this World, with what infinite Consolation may he look forward into the next; where, by the Eye of Faith, he sees the Blessed Jesus, ready to receive him into Glory, and thinks, he already hears him pronouncing that joyful Sentence to him, *Come thou blessed of my Father, &c.*



S E R M O N V.

The Measures of Christian
Charity, in not seeking
our own private Good.



I C O R. xiii, 5.

----- *Seeketh not her own.*

The Context runs thus ----- *Cha-
rity suffereth long, and is kind,
Charity envyeth not, Charity vaunt-
eth not itself, is not puffed up, doth
not behave itself unseemly, SEEK-
ETH NOT HER OWN.*



THE Apostle in the foregoing Chap-
ter, and other Places of this Epistle,
sets himself to reform several Cor-
ruptions that had crept into the
Church of *Corinth*, chiefly through the Abuse
or disorderly Exercise of those supernatural
and

and miraculous Gifts of the Spirit, that many Believers were then endow'd with; which, as they did not necessarily derive any sanctifying and saving Grace upon the Hearts and Minds of those that were favour'd with them, and were given them not so much for their own Sakes, as for the Benefit and Advantage of others, and the Edification which the Church might receive from the evident Indications which the Holy Ghost thereby gave of his Divine Presence among them; so we find they were made the Subject-Matter of much Contention, Emulation and Vain-Glory; and as a natural Consequence of these, of many Factions and Schisms, and Divisions in the Church; occasion'd chiefly, as St. Chrysostome and Theophylact observe, by that Pride and Self-Conceit, that many of the Philosophers and Rhetoricians, with which that City abounded, were too much tinctur'd with, even after their Conversion to the Christian Faith. To rectify and reform these Disorders, and compose the Differences consequent upon them, he puts them in Mind, that seeing they receiv'd these Gifts from the Spirit of God, dividing to every Man severally as he will, there cou'd be no Ground for any Man's Boasting, or being puff'd up in his own Mind, or despising and undervaluing others; and since they were all wrought by one and the same Spirit, they ought not

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to be oppos'd one to another, nor the lesser be disparag'd; but, as in the natural Body, all the Members, content with those distinct Offices God has assign'd them, sympathize with, and mutually contribute to the Support and Comfort of each other, and to the Safety and Preservation of the whole: So they being incorporated into, and made Fellow-Members of that one Mystical Body of Christ; in the Use and Exercise of those Gifts, ought to have a special Regard to the Benefit of their Brethren, and to the Peace and Edification of the whole Church. And therefore, in the Conclusion of that Chapter, he exhorts them to *covet*, *i. e.* to desire, and pray earnestly for the *best* Gifts, such as wou'd make them most useful and profitable to the Church of God, as Propheying, whereby they might exhort, comfort, and edify others, rather than the Gift of Tongues, or working Miracles; which tho' they made a greater Shew, yet were of less Advantage to their Brethren.

And yet, after all, he tells them, he had a far more excellent Way to prescribe to them, of ministring both to their own and the Church's Welfare, and that is *Charity*: Without which, all their supernatural Gifts, upon which they were so apt to magnify themselves, and undervalue others, wou'd but little avail them. This he shews them in the three first Verses of this Thirteenth Chap-

ter. And then, that he might give them at once both a just Idea of the Worth and Excellency of this noble and divine Principle, and also certain Marks, whereby, upon looking into their own Hearts and Actions, they might readily discover whether they were endow'd with it or no, he proceeds to describe it to them by several distinguishing Properties of it, of which this in my Text is one, *viz.* — *That it seeketh not its own*: In Opposition to that narrow selfish Spirit, that disposes Men to intend the Gratification of their own Humours or Interests, as the chief Motive to, and the ultimate End in all their Actions; as what they are most prevalently affected with, and prefer before all other Considerations whatsoever: Which, if strictly examin'd into, wou'd be found to be the common Source, from whence both our Impiety towards God, and all unnatural Quarrels and Contentions among Men, that create so much Disorder and Confusion in the World, and disturb the Peace of humane Society, do chiefly take their Rise. And therefore, I hope, the recommending to you, upon this Occasion, this Branch of Christian Charity, in Opposition to that pernicious Principle, will not prove either an unprofitable or an unseasonable Undertaking. And the Method in which I purpose to prosecute this Argument, is this,

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First, I shall endeavour to state the Measures of Christian Charity in this particular Instance of it, to shew the Bounds and Limits of its Obligation; how, or wherein we may, or may not *seek our own*. And,

Secondly, Having discover'd the true Import and Meaning of the Expression, and seen how far, in what Sense, and in what Instances this Rule of Christian Charity is binding and obligatory, I shall endeavour by some proper Arguments to excite and stir you up to a careful and conscientious Observance of it.

First, I am to state the Measures of Christian Charity in this particular Instance of it, to shew the Bounds and Limits of its Obligation, how, or wherein we may, or may not *seek our own*. But before we proceed to a stricter Discussion of this Point, I think it will be expedient, that we carry along with us a general Notion of this Divine Principle of Charity, and of that Self-seeking which is here oppos'd to it; which will help to render more easy and intelligible, what shall be advanc'd in the further Prosecution of this Argument. Now,

First, Charity or Love, as it has Man for its Object, according to the Definition that *Rhet. 1. 2. Aristotle* gives of it, is such an Habit, or Temper of Mind, as inclines us to wish others whatsoever we account good ourselves, and that for their Sakes, and not our own, and to

Rhet. 1. 2.
c. 4.

to express and manifest the Sincerity of our Affections in contributing all we can towards the Procurement of what we wish them, if they want it, or the Continuance of it, if they have it. As Justice restrains us from injuring others, either by retaining, or taking from them what in any Respect does of Right belong to them, so Charity prompts us to do all the good Offices we can; to consider their Case and Condition as our own, to sympathize with them in all the Good or Evil that befalls them, to rejoice with them in their Prosperity, and to compassionate, to succour, and relieve them, to the utmost of our Power, when under any Affliction or Misery. It makes us affable and courteous to those that are below us, candid, and ready to maintain all good Correspondence with our Equals; respectful and submissive to our Superiors; grateful to those that have done us any Good; and meek, and merciful, and ready to forgive those that have done us any Injury. In a Word, it obliges us to love others as ourselves; and to be ready to forgo our own Good, when it any Time stands in Competition with the more considerable Good of another. This is that most excellent Gift of Charity; in Comparison of which all those supernatural Gifts of Prophecy, of Tongues, and Miracles, that the *Corinthians* so much magnify'd themselves upon, are in the Apostle's Esteem to be accounted

as nothing. It is the proper Badge and Cognizance of our holy Profession, by which alone we may know ourselves, or be known of others to be Christ's Disciples: And is represented by St. John, as that which alone can give us any Evidence of our having an Interest in God and Christ. Beloved, let us love one another; for Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God. And again, [Ver. 13.] If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, For hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of that loving Temper and Spirit of his. Again, [Chap. 3. 14.] We know, says he, that we have pass'd from Death to Life, because we love the Brethren.

Secondly, For the better understanding what is meant by this seeking our own, which is represented here as inconsistent with, and contrary to this Divine Grace of Charity, it will not be amiss to consider some of those Parallel-Places, where we have the same Apostle in other Terms, either forbidding the same Thing, or enjoining the contrary. Thus Rom. 15, 1, 2. We ought not to please ourselves, but let every one please his Neighbour for his Good to Edification. And this Injunction he inforces with the Example of Christ, for even Christ pleas'd not himself; but for the Glory of God, and Good of Mankind, patiently endur'd the Contradiction and Reproaches of Sinners, and laid down his Life for

for them: And *Phil. 2. 4.* *Look not every Man on his own Things, but every Man also on the Things of others,* and *1 Cor. 10. 24.* speaking of the Use of Christian Liberty, he lays down this Rule, *Let no Man seek his own, but every Man another's Wealth.* From whence we may gather, that by seeking our own, as it here stands oppos'd to Charity, is to be understood such an inordinate Concern for ourselves, our own Satisfaction and Interest in what we do, as makes us regardless of the Good of others; unconcern'd at, and unaffected with what befalls them.

Now, this being premis'd in general, touching the Nature of Charity, and that Self-seeking which is here oppos'd to it; I proceed to consider more particularly the proper Measures of this Branch of Christian Charity; the Bounds and Limits of its Obligation, how, or wherein we may, or may not *seek our own*: And what I have to offer upon this Head, I shall comprize under four general Propositions, of which the first is this:

First, It cannot be the Apostle's Meaning here, wholly and absolutely to exclude all seeking of our own Good, Benefit or Advantage, as inconsistent with the Duty of Charity: Because whatsoever a Man may lawfully desire, he may lawfully seek, and use all proper and honest Means to accomplish that Desire, and make it effectual. For to

suppose that a Thing may be lawful in the Desire, and yet unlawful in the Attainment, is to suppose a plain and evident Contradiction, viz. that we may, and may not desire the same Thing. Now, as to a Man's desiring his own Good, his own Welfare and Happiness, it is not a Matter of Choice, but of Necessity, as necessary as his very Being; what he is indispenibly oblig'd to by that irresistible Principle of Self-love, that God has woven into the very Frame and Make of his Creatures. This is one of the primary Laws of Nature, and its Obligation being founded upon the Authority of God himself, is sacred and inviolable; and when rightly understood, can never interfere with, or contravene any other Divine Law whatsoever. Indeed, this Principle of Self-love, consider'd absolutely, and in itself, is so far from being sinful, or any Way blameable in the Sight of God, that all Religion is chiefly founded upon it, and plainly supposes it. For the infinite Wisdom of God wou'd never have made the Promises of Eternal Bliss, and the Threatnings of Everlasting Misery, the Sanction of his Laws, but in Consideration of, and with Regard to this Principle; as what wou'd most powerfully and prevalently dispose us to aspire after that Happiness, and avoid that Misery, by pursuing the Methods prescrib'd for that End.

Which,

Which, by the Way, shews the Absurdity of that Enthusiastic Notion of some Mystic Divines, and others that have borrow'd it from them, *viz*, that we are bound to love and serve God, without any Respect to the Reward of our Duty, or any Benefit or Advantage that may accrue to us from it. For, besides that the Excellencies and Perfections of the Divine Nature cannot, properly speaking, be reputed the Objects of our Love, while we consider them absolutely, and as they are in themselves, without any Relation to the Benefits that arise to us from them, but only of our Esteem and Veneration, which are Acts of the Understanding, and not of the Will: And besides, that we find this an Ingredient in the most pure and perfect Love of God that ever was, not only of Moses, who *had a Respect to the Recompence of Reward*, in refusing to be call'd the Son of Pharaoh's Daughter; but even of the Son of God himself, *who* Heb. xii. 2. *endured the Cross, despising the Shame, for the Joy that was set before him.* Besides all this, it evidently contradicts, you see, the whole Scope and Design of the Gospel, and renders all the Motives and Arguments to Evangelical Obedience ineffectual, as being grounded upon, and accommodated to this natural Principle of Self-love, necessarily prompting us to desire and seek after Happiness, and to avoid Misery.

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The Truth is, Self-love, according as it is well, or ill-understood and apply'd, is the chief Source of all the moral Good and Evil that is in the World. So long as it fixes itself upon a right Object, the true and real Happiness of our Nature, and is subjected to, and directed by right Reason and the Laws of God, it is the great Principle of Duty; which, whatever corrupt Nature may insinuate to the contrary, is no more in Effect, than another Name for Happiness. But when it is misapply'd to an undue Object, when a Man sets up a Self of his own making, his irregular Passion and Appetites, and the impure Pleasures that tend to the Gratification of a carnal sensual Mind, and all Regard to God and Man must give Way to, and bow down to this Idol that he has erected in his own Mind; hence it is, that all Impiety towards God, and all the Violation of the Laws of Justice, and Charity towards Men derive their Original.

The Sum of what has been said is this, that it cannot be the Apostle's Meaning, to exclude wholly and absolutely all seeking of our own Good, Benefit, or Advantage, as inconsistent with Charity; because to seek and desire our own Happiness is what we are indispensably bound to by that irresistible Principle of Self-Love that God has planted in our Nature, and which he

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allows of, and supposes, in binding his Laws upon us by the Proposal of Rewards and Punishments, and that the seeking our own Good or Happiness does not become sinful, but through the Corruption, or Misapplication of that Principle, when it swerves from the Rules of right Reason, and the Laws of God, by which it ought to be directed and govern'd, and Man makes and considers that as Self, which God never made, nor intended to be so. But,

Secondly, Self-love becomes vicious, and inconsistent with the Obligations of Christian Charity, when it puts a Man upon seeking his own in such Cases, where the Benefit he proposes to himself is inconsiderable, in Respect of the Damage and Prejudice his Neighbour shall sustain by his so doing.

There is no Doubt, but that a Man may safely, and with a very good Conscience, appeal to, and crave the Defence and Protection of the Laws, when any real, and very considerable Injury is done him, either in Relation to his Person, or his Estate, or his good Name and Reputation, and he cannot have it redress'd by fair and amicable Means; and when he cannot sit down quietly with it, without doing a very apparent, and a very great Prejudice to his own, or other collateral Interests by it. But, nevertheless, if the Injury is not either in itself, nor in its Consequences, very considerable, and what

what he foresees bears no Proportion to the great Inconveniences such a Prosecution of his Right wou'd bring upon the Person that wrongs him, even to the impoverishing, perhaps Ruin, both of him and his Family; no Doubt but in such a Case, a good Man wou'd choose rather to forgo his Right, than pursue it on those Terms: concluding, as he well might, that so far as he foresaw the Damage he shou'd thereby bring upon his offending Brother wou'd exceed what he suffer'd himself, so far he shou'd only take the Advantage of the Law to do him a greater Injury than what he sought to redress. Charity wou'd here interpose, and mitigate, and soften the Rigour of strict Justice, and not suffer him to prosecute every inconsiderable Trespass, every trivial Affront, every reproachful and slanderous Word to the utmost Advantage that the Law wou'd give him over his Neighbour; but oblige him rather to suffer a tolerable Wrong, than retaliate it by doing a much greater. And certainly, so much, at least, must be included in that Com-

Matth. v. 39, 40. mand of our Blessed Saviour, *Whosoever shall smite thee on the Right Cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any Man will sue thee at the Law, and take away thy Coat, let him have thy Cloak also.* Tho' God, being the Author of Society, must be supposed to allow of what is absolutely necessary

sary for its Preservation, as appealing to the Magistrate for the Redress of Injuries in some Cases certainly is; yet where the Wrong we suffer is small or tolerable, and the Penalty which the Law, for the Discouragement of others, will inflict upon the Offender, will be much greater than the personal Injury which he has done us, in such Cases he wou'd have us rather to bear it with Patience, than make the Law the Instrument of our Revenge. What we suffer in such a Case we may place to God's Account, and say, as *Achilles* does in *Homer* (but upon much better Grounds, because we have an expresse Promise, that if we forgive Men their Trespases, our Heavenly Father will also forgive us) φρονέω δε τετιμῆσαι Διὸς ἄλσιν, "I look for a Reward of
"this my Charity from God.

We have a remarkable Instance of this in the Conduct of *Abraham*, in the Controversy that happen'd between him and *Lot*. He does not stand upon his own Right, or make Use of that legal Authority which he had over his Nephew, but to prevent all Occasion of Strife, offers him freely the Choice of the Land, *If thou wilt take the Left-Hand, then I will go to the Right, or, if thou depart to the Right-Hand, then I will go to the Left.* There may be something in the Circumstances of this Story peculiar to those Persons and Times,

Gen. xiii.

Times, that may make this Method of deciding Controversies of the like Nature among us at this Day, in most Cases, impracticable. But the mild and peaceable Temper of *Abraham*, and his Readiness to accommodate the Controversy that had risen between them, by forgoing his own Right, will always be a proper Pattern for our Imitation, whenever the not insisting upon our Right will prove of much greater Advantage to our Neighbour, than of Prejudice to ourselves.

Thirdly, Tho' the seeking a Man's own, when it is necessary and very highly expedient, may, as to the Matter of it, be very consistent with all the Obligations of Christian Charity; yet the Way, or Manner of doing it, and other collateral Circumstances, may so alter the Case, as to make that sinful, which is in itself, and duly circumstantiated, lawful and innocent.

Put the Case, for Instance, that my Right is unjustly invaded, and that to such a Degree, that if I tamely give it up, and do not stand upon my own Defence, my own Interest, and the Interests of those that depend upon me, or are to come after me, and for whom I have a Trust virtually, at least, repos'd in me, will be very considerably impair'd and prejudic'd by it. No Doubt but in such a Case, I not only may, but ought to make my Appeal to Publick Justice for

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the Redress of such a Grievance. But, if I pursue this Design with Enmity and Malice, with personal Hatred, and a Spirit of Revenge; if I am not content with making a just Defence of my Right, with all the Prudence, and Diligence, and Circumspection I can; but use vexatious Arts, to create the greater Trouble and Expence to my Adversary, and to bring all the Inconveniences I can upon him: Doubtless this must be highly sinful, and very unsuitable to the meek, and gentle, and charitable Spirit of the Gospel, which expressly forbids all returning of Evil for Evil, and is so far from allowing us to persecute those that hate us, that it forbids us, to hate our Persecutors, but commands us to love even our very Enemies. And in such a Case, it wou'd be much safer for a Christian to part with his Right than his Charity.

Again, there's no Doubt but a Man may seek his own Credit or Interest, endeavour to establish to himself a good Reputation, or to better his Fortunes in the World, without any Breach of the Laws either of Justice or Charity. But if in either of these Cases, he prosecutes an honest and lawful End by dishonest Means, if he goes about to raise his own Reputation upon the Ruins of other Men's, endeavouring by all the vilifying Arts of Detraction and Calumny to sully and blacken the Credit of others, that
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his own may shine the brighter, and with more Advantage; or cares not who he makes poor and low, in Order to make himself rich and high: These base Ways of prosecuting it, makes the *seeking his own Good* sinful, and a Violation of the Laws of Christian Charity. And the same will hold in many other Cases, that tho' the Thing itself might lawfully be done, yet the Manner of doing it, and when the Means are not symbolical to the End, may make it sinful.

Fourthly, My Fourth and Last Proposition is this: When Self-love makes Men seek their own in Opposition to, or to the Prejudice of the Publick Good, this is contrary to, and a Breach of this Rule of Carity.

Mankind find a very strong Propensity to Society implanted in their very Nature, and the more we know of ourselves, and of the present State and Condition of the World, the stronger that Inclination grows in us. When we consider our own Wants, and Weakness, and Imperfections, in what Need we stand of the mutual Help and Assistance of one another, for all the outward Comforts and Conveniencies of Life, how much the Safety of our Persons, and the Security of all our Civil Rights and Properties, are owing to the Influence of the Laws of that Political Society whereof we are Members, and how wild, and savage, and uninhabitable a Place this World wou'd soon be to
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all good Men, if those wholesome Restraints that are thereby laid upon the troublesome and unsociable Passions and irregular Propensities of corrupt Nature were taken away. When we consider these Things, I say, we soon perceive how closely our private Interests are interwoven with, and depend upon that of the Public: And consequently, how prejudicial every Thing that tends to the weakening the Authority, or interrupting the Peace of the Government we live under, must needs be to the real Good of every individual Subject, whose Welfare and Happiness is involv'd in that of the Public, and next to the Protection of Almighty God, owes its Security and Preservation to it.

But when Men come to sever their own Interest from that of the rest of Mankind, and have no Regard to public Good further than it proves subservient to some selfish Designs of their own; when, in Pursuance of this base and unworthy Principle, Parties and Factions are rais'd in a Nation, and fomented, and blown up into a Flame by *Boutefeaus* and ill-designing Men on either Side: When odious Marks of Distinctions, invidious Names, opprobrious Characters, and pernicious Designs are invented, and fix'd upon each other, and propagated by all the malicious Arts of Calumny and Slander, to blacken and defame all those that oppose them;

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and all this, only to raise a Mist to hinder the Discovery of that sordid Principle of Self-love, that, however disguis'd, usually lies at the Bottom of all: In short, when common Dangers, and common Deliverances are so far from composing these unnatural Divisions, from extinguishing these Heats and Animosities among those Rivals in Power and Greatness, that they rather inflame them the more, and only administer Occasion to them to raise themselves, and to depress, and get Ground of their Adversaries: When such ill-boding Symptoms as these appear in any Nation or People, when they see such a black Cloud as this gathering, and swelling over their Heads, have they not just Reason to think that it portends some dreadful Storm a-coming, that if God in his Mercy do not avert it, it may prove fatal both to Church and State?

2 Tim. iii. 13. St. Paul makes it a certain Prognostic, or Indication of perillous Times, *when Men shall become Lovers of themselves.* And the Reason is evident, because from that bitter and poysonous Root of Self-love spring all those noxious Humours that disturb the Peace of humane Society, and dissolve that Cement of mutual Love and Charity, wherein the Safety and Security of Mankind chiefly consists. For what are all those unsociable Passions of Pride, and Envy, and Ambition, and Cove-

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tousness, &c. but the same evil Spirit of an inordinate Self-love, under so many different Shapes? What is Pride, but the over-flowing of a distemper'd Soul, swoln and puff'd up, with an over-weening and partial Love of some Excellency which a Man fancies to be in himself, and wanting in others? What is Envy, but an ill-natur'd Aversion, to see others in any Respect more happy, or fortunate than ourselves? Or Ambition, but a Desire to raise ourselves to some real, or imaginary Superiority over them? Or Covetousness, generally speaking, but an impatient Thirst after that Power and Preeminence that usually attend Riches? And therefore, whenever this pernicious Spirit, the Enemy of Peace, and the Bane of Society, prevails; good Men may wish and pray for it, but there is but little Ground to expect to see any other than evil and perillous Times; till God is pleas'd to turn Men's Hearts, and that more public Spirit of true Christian Charity revives, and regains its due Influence and Authority upon the Minds and Consciences of Mankind, and makes them to see how much it is both their Interest and their Duty, not to *seek their own* in any Case, in Opposition to the publick Good? Which being the very Foundation on which the particular Interests of every Individual are built, whatever tends to the Prejudice of it, must be accounted a Breach of Charity in one of the highest Instances of it.

Having now discover'd the true Import and Meaning of the Words, *seeketh not her own*, seen how far, in what Sense, and in what Instances this Rule of Charity is binding and obligatory, I beg Leave in the next Place,

By some proper Arguments, to excite and stir up both myself and you to the due Observance of it: And these shall be taken from the intrinsic Excellency of the Duty itself, and from the natural Tendency it hath to promote both our present, and our future Happiness.

First, The intrinsic Excellency of this Duty, requiring us not to be unduly solicitous in *seeking our own*, but to endeavour to promote, as much as in us lies, the Welfare and Happiness of all Mankind, will, if duly consider'd, highly recommend the Practice of it, to every well-dispos'd Christian.

Now, the infinite Perfections of the Divine Nature are the proper Standard, and Pattern of all Worth and Excellency in the Creature; which must necessarily rise and fall, in Proportion to the Resemblance it bears to that Divine Original, whereof it is the Copy or Transcript. And tho', all the Attributes of God are proper Objects for our Love, and Reverence, and Adoration; yet the infinite Goodness and Benignity of his Divine Nature, that extends to, and diffuses itself like an universal Soul through the whole Creation,

is of all others the fittest for our Imitation. Now, what is there that so nearly resembles the great Archetype of all Excellency and Perfection in this Respect, as a Soul influenc'd and enlarg'd with this truly noble and generous Principle of universal Love and Benevolence; whose Wishes and Desires, whose Aims and Endeavours are all levell'd at the Good and Welfare of Mankind: Who loves his Neighbour as himself, and considers the Interests and the Good of others as his own, and in many Cases preferable to it, and never accounts himself so happy, as when others have been benefited by him. Doubtless such Men do well deserve to have their Names had in Reverence, and not to be mention'd without Honour. And tho, so long as there is such a Thing as an Evil Spirit in the World to tempt, and such black and sullen Passions, as Envy, and Malice, and a vicious Self-love, to sour the Tempers and Dispositions of Men, it may sometimes fall out otherwise, and that such Persons do not meet with Returns answerable to their Deserts, yet, if the Good they do, cannot always overcome the Ungratitude of some, their Generosity and Greatness of Mind will enable them to overlook and pity it, and make them more solicitous to merit the good Esteem of others, than to obtain it.

Now, tho the Excellency of this Divine Grace of Charity, that renders all that are

endow'd with it studious and solicitous above all Things to promote the Welfare and Happiness of Mankind, is sufficiently evident from the near Resemblance it bears to the divine Nature, the infinite Benignity and Goodness of God; yet it may be further illustrated, by comparing with it that narrow and fordid Principle of Self-love, that is here oppos'd to it; which prompts a Man to set up a separate Interest of his own, to which all other Interests whatsoever that any Way interfere with it, are forc'd to give Way; than which nothing can be more base in itself, or more repugnant to the true Temper and Spirit of the Gospel.

For, he that makes all his Care and Concern, all his Projects and Designs thus to centre in himself, and has no Regard to any Man's Interest or Happiness but his own, such a Man defeats all the Ends of Society, and makes himself a common Enemy to Mankind; and exposes himself, when once he is discover'd, to the Hatred and Contempt of all that know him. For, tho' some may have so far debauch'd those natural Principles that dispose them for Society, as to be able to make tolerable Shift to allow of this vicious Self-love in themselves, yet there is none, but detest and abominate it in others, For all Men expect and look for a kind and friendly Entertainment from others, and are dis-

displeas'd, and uneasie to meet with any Disappointment, how partial soever this base selfish Spirit may make them in their Returns.

And, as this vicious Self-seeking is base and unworthy in itself, so nothing can be more opposite to that truly noble and generous Temper, that Christianity inspires all its true and sincere Professors with. It purges the Soul of all those four ill-natur'd Passions of Pride and Envy, and Malice, and Revenge, &c. that disturb the Peace of the World, the Seeds of all Schisms, and Divisions in the Church, and all Factions and Confusions in the State. It teaches us to *put on Bowels of* Col. xii. *Mercy, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness,* ^{13.} *Long-suffering, to forbear one another, and to forgive one another; if any Man have a Quarrel against any; to treat, and consider all Men as our Brethren, to sympathize, to rejoice, or suffer with them in all the Good, or Evil that befalls them; to do Good unto all Men, to be kindly affection'd one towards another with brotherly Love, to bear one another's Burdens, to submit ourselves one to another, in Lowliness of Mind, each esteeming other better than himself, not to please ourselves, not to seek our own, not to look to our own Things only, but to love one another with a pure Heart fervently, and to be willing even to lay down our Life for our Brethren.* This is that noble, that divine

Temper of Soul, that the Gospel recommends, and requires in all its Professors, the very Reverse of that narrow, selfish Spirit that prevails so much in the World.

Secondly, It will be a farther Recommendation of this Property of Christian Charity, if, to the intrinsic Excellency of it, we add in the next Place, the Consideration of the great Influence it has upon the present Happiness of Mankind in this present World.

The very Frame of our Nature, and those connate Impressions that God has stampt upon it, dispose us to this Duty of Charity. And, as we cannot act contrary to the Obligations it lays upon us, without suffering the secret Censures and Reproaches of our own Minds; so on the contrary, there is nothing fills a good Soul with greater, and truer Delight, than the Sense of his being effectually acted, and influenc'd by that generous, and God-like Principle; the comfortable Testimony of his Conscience, that he is not wanting in expressing that universal Love and Beneficence towards all Men, which it excites and prompts him to; And, as the opposite Temper naturally makes Men testy and sullen, uneasy to themselves, and to all they converse with; and, in Consequence of that, exposes them to the Hatred and Aversion of others; so
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the inward Goodness and Benignity of a Soul influenc'd by this Principle, diffuses a peculiar Sweetness, and Serenity into the very Countenance of such a Person, that attracts the Esteem and Good-will of all that know him, ingratiates, and endears him to Mankind. And, as he is found ready, on all Occasions, to forgo his own Interest, and all selfish Regards for the Good of his Neighbour, so he is more likely to meet with suitable Returns of Kindness and Friendship, than he that regards, and values no Man but himself. However, this he is sure of; the same charitable Temper, that makes him so solicitous for the general Good of Mankind, will give him a Share in all the Good that happens to others; Whatever benefits, or advantages them, or tends to their Happiness in any Respect, will administer Matter of Comfort, Delight, and Satisfaction to himself.

And, if this kind, and benevolent Spirit prevailed as universally among us, as it is every Man's Interest, as well as Duty, to wish, and endeavour that it may; this World wou'd soon become a much more comfortable Place of Abode, than any wise and good Man has Reason to think it at present. Instead of injuring, provoking, and exasperating their Brethren, Men wou'd become

come Guardian-Angels to each other, to promote and advance one another's Happiness; and the only Contention and Emulation among us wou'd be, not who shou'd exceed others in Riches, or Greatness, or Power; but who shou'd do the most Good, contribute most to the Peace and Tranquillity of the World, and the Welfare, and Happiness of Mankind. There wou'd then be no different Interests, to form Factions and Parties upon in the State, nor mutual Distracts and Jealousies to inflame them: Princes wou'd rule with Ease, and Subjects wou'd obey with Pleasure: Nor wou'd Men then, for every private Humour, or Opinion of their own, touching Things allow'd to be indifferent in their own Nature, and enjoyn'd by a competent Authority, and where the Dispute is not about their Lawfulness, but Expediency; Men wou'd not, I say, upon such slight Grounds, think it became them to disturb the Peace, and break the Communion of an Establish'd Church. Which, by the Way, ought certainly never to be done, but where the Sinfulness of complying with something enjoyn'd by that Church, is as plain and evident, as it is our Duty to be obedient to our Lawful Superiours, to *submit to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's Sake.* Then, in a Word, we shou'd

shou'd soon see those blessed Times draw on, which God by his holy Prophet has foretold shall come, when all Quarrels, and Contentions, and Animosities, shall cease in the World, *When the Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard shall lie down with the Kid, and the Calf, and the young Lion, and the Fatling together, and a young Child shall lead them, and the Cow and the Bear shall feed, and their young Ones shall lie down together, and the Lion shall eat Straw like an Ox, and the sucking Child shall play upon the Hole of an Asp, and the wean'd Child shall put his Hand on the Cockatrice-Den. All Cruelty and Ferity of Nature shall be laid aside, they shall not hurt, nor destroy in all my holy Mountain, saith the Lord; for the Earth shall be full of the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Seas.* Which happy State wou'd be an Anticipation of our future Blessedness, and make us taste of the Joys of Heaven here on Earth. And this brings me in the.

Third, and last Place, to consider, as a further Motive to stir us up to the Practice of this Duty, the natural Tendency it will have to promote our future Happiness, to fit and prepare us for a better World.

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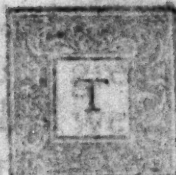
I make no Doubt, but that which chiefly determines the State and Condition of Souls either to eternal Bliss or Misery, upon their leaving this World, is the fix'd, settled, and prevailing Temper they are in; as the good, or evil Habits which they have contracted, and carry with them, fit and dispose them, either for Eternal Communion with God, and all vertuous and holy Spirits in the Kingdom of Heaven, or for the Fellowship and Society of wicked and Apostate Spirits in the Kingdom of Darknes; according as their Nature is either through the Prevalency of Grace, become conformable to the pure and holy Nature of God, or through the Power of Sin transform'd into the Likeness, or Resemblance of Satan: And that these vertuous and vicious Habitues contracted in this, and perfected in the other World, will prove to be not the Instruments, but a considerable Part of our future Happiness or Misery. And, if so, a very comfortable Discovery it must needs be, if, upon searching, and examining into the State and Condition of our Souls, we find in ourselves this Divine Grace of Charity, prevalently disposing us to wish and pray for, to desire, and promote, as much as in us lies, the Good and Welfare of all the World, to love all Men as ourselves, and

and for God's Sake, and to despise all narrow and selfish Regards for our own Good, whenever it comes in Competition with that of the Public, or with the more considerable Good of any of our Brethren. This universal Love and Benevolence is the nearest Resemblance of our heavenly Father, that our Weakness can attain to in this World. And the more we are like him in this, and all his other imitable Perfections, the surer Ground we have to build our Hopes upon, that we are prepar'd, and in a due Disposition for Eternal Fellowship and Communion with him in his Heavenly Kingdom; to mix with, and be incorporated into that happy Society of pure and holy Spirits in those blessed Regions above: Whose chief Felicity, next to the Love and Enjoyment of God, consists, no Doubt, in that ardent, and unextinguishable Love and Affection, where with they embrace one another, delight, feel, and partake in each other's Happiness: Where there are no Factions, no different Interests, no Animosities, or Emulations to interrupt, or disturb the Rest that there remains for the Children of God; nothing but Peace, and Love, and Joy, and that for evermore.

Oh!

Oh! that we wou'd be often with
 God in the Mount, often raising our
 Minds to the Contemplation of that blis-
 ful State, and by an active, and lively
 Faith, anticipating, as it were, our Hopes
 of those ravishing Delights, those pure,
 unmixt, and never-fading Joys that we
 look for in our Saviour's Kingdom. Our
 Souls wou'd bring down with them from
 thence a generous Contempt of all those
 trifling Interests, that the Children of this
 World are pursuing with so much Eager-
 ness and Sollicitude, and are so apt to
 quarrel about here below. Our Hearts
 and Affections wou'd be in Heaven, and
 our Faces wou'd shine among Men. And,
 having our Desires, our Hopes, and Ex-
 pectations fix'd upon the End of our Jour-
 ney, we shou'd have little Occasion, or
 Inclination to fall out by the Way, 'till
 God shall call us at last to receive the
 Reward of our Charity, and our Love
 was perfected, and consummated in Glo-
 ry. And, to this End, "Let us pray,
 "that God, who has taught us, that all
 "our Doings without Charity are nothing
 "worthy, will be pleas'd to send his
 "Holy Ghost, and pour into our Hearts
 "that most excellent Gift of Charity, the
 "very Bond of Peace, and of all Ver-
 "tues, without which, whosoever liveth,
 "is

“is counted dead before him”; that having adorn’d our most holy Profession, by living a Life of universal Love and Benevolence towards all Men here below, we may be at last received up into the Endearments of his Eternal Love, to sing Everlasting Praises to him that sitteth up- on the Throne, and to the Lamb for evermore. And this let us beg, thro’ the Merits, and Intercession of his Blessed Son, our Dear Redeemer, Jesus Christ. To whom, with the Father, &c.



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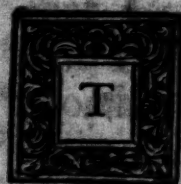
SERMON VI.

Of the Angel of the Covenant, and the Mediatorial Kingdom of Christ.

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MALACHI iii. 1.

*Behold, I will send my Messenger, and he shall prepare the Way before me: And the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his Temple; even the Angel of the Covenant whom ye desire. In behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.*



**T**HAT these Words are a Prophecy, relating to the Person, and Office of the Messiah, and his Coming into the World, besides the concurrent Testimony of all Expositors, both Jewish and Christian, we have the infallible Authority of our Blessed Saviour himself to assure

assure us, *Matth. 11. 10.* where he expressly applies them to himself and his Fore-runner, *John the Baptist.* The Time when they were spoken must have been not many Years after the Building of the second Temple at *Jerusalem*, upon the Return of the *Jews* from their Captivity in *Babylon*: The Gift of Prophecy, according to the *Jewish* Chronology, having ceas'd with this last of the Prophets, about Forty Years after that Temple was finish'd; that God might thereby signifie to the *Jews*, that the Legal Dispensation was then drawing towards a Conclusion, and so quicken and enliven their Expectations of, and Desires after that more plentiful Effusion of his Spirit, which he had promised by the Prophet *Joel, 2. 28, 29.* shou'd be in the Times of the *Messiah.* As to the particular Occasion upon which they were spoken, it was to obviate a double Misconstruction, which the *Jews* were apt to put upon their own Condition, and God's dealing with them at that Time: His not manifesting himself to them in so eminent a Manner in this, as he had done in the former Temple before their Captivity, being Matter of great Trouble and Discontent to those that were well-disposed, and of Encouragement to the bad, to go on more boldly in their Wickedness. For we read, that many of the Priests, *Ezra iii.* and Levites, and chief of the Fathers, who <sup>12.</sup> were ancient Men, that had seen the first House,  
L wept



*wept with a loud Voice, when the Foundation of this Temple was laid; being sensible how far short it would fall of the Greatness, the Riches, the Beauty, Glory, and Magnificence of that of Solomon's, which they had seen destroy'd by the Chaldeans before the Captivity.*

This was Matter of great Trouble and Discouragement to many zealous and devout Persons among them; but especially, when they found afterwards, that God did not give such Manifestations of his immediate Presence in this, as he had done under the former Temple. The Fire did not fall down from Heaven, to consume the Sacrifices at the Dedication of this second House, as it did at that of the former. The Ark of the Covenant, the Cherubim, and all the Furniture of the Sanctuary were wanting; no Answers were given by *Urim* and *Thummim*, nor did the *Shechinah*, or Majestatic Presence of God exhibit itself as formerly in the Symbol of a bright, and glittering Cloud over the Mercy-Seat in the Sanctuary. The want of these Things, as it was Matter of Grief to good Men, considering it as the Effect of God's Displeasure, and his withdrawing himself, and the Light of his Countenance from his People; so others, on the contrary, took Occasion from hence to encourage themselves in their Wickedness, doubting of, and distrusting his Providence; as if he had now

left

left them entirely to themselves, and either saw the Evil that was done, and was not displeas'd with it; or else, neither saw, nor regarded; as may be gather'd from the last Verse of the preceding Chapter; where the Prophet tells them, that *they wearied the Lord with their Words, when they said, Every One that doeth Evil, is Good in the Sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them, or, where is the God of Judgment?* But to take away all Occasion, either of Discouragement, or Presumption upon these Accounts, by Reason either of their New Temple's being so much inferiour to the former, in Point of outward Splendor and Magnificence, or in Respect of the Want of those visible Pledges, and Symbols of his immediate, and more peculiar Presence in it, God gives them this comfortable Assurance by the Prophet *Haggai*, 1. 3, 4, &c. "That, tho' this House was, in the Eyes of those that had seen it in its first Glory, as nothing in Comparison of it; yet in a little while the *Desire*, or the *desired* of all Nations shou'd come, and so wou'd fill this House with Glory; so that the Glory of this latter House shou'd be greater than that of the former". And these Words of my Text, which serve to explain, and illustrate this Prophecy, shew more particularly wherein that more excellent Glory shou'd consist: Namely, that the Lord whom they sought and enquired

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after,



after, *the Messenger, the Angel, or Prince of the Covenant whom they delighted in*, and earnestly expected, wou'd suddenly come himself to his Temple; in whom the Majesty and Glory of God shou'd appear and manifest itself, in a far more illustrious Manner than it had done formerly, in those Typical Signs, and Symbols of his Presence in the Sanctuary, to the great Comfort and Consolation of the Good, and the Terror and Destruction of the Wicked.

In these Words, then, we may conceive God Almighty to speak to this Effect, with Respect both to those good Men who were discourag'd, and those wicked Ones who grew presumptuous, and distrustful of his Providence, upon the Discontinuance of those former external Manifestations of his Presence among them. "Whereas, there  
 "are some among you, that are troubled,  
 "and uneasy at the State and Condition  
 "ye are now in; as if I had forsaken my  
 "People, or had not the same tender Re-  
 "gard for you, which I had for your Fa-  
 "thers; and others again grow presumptu-  
 "ous, and encourage themselves in their  
 "Wickedness, — saying, in a scornful and  
 "contemptuous Manner, *Where is that God*  
 "of *Judgment*, who formerly indeed made  
 "his Abode among us, *whose Tabernacle was*  
 "at Salem, and his Dwelling-Place in Sion?  
 "But now has withdrawn himself from  
 "us,

us, and seems not to be affected either  
with the Good or Evil that we do? Be-  
hold, the Time will shortly come, when  
I shall appear in the World in a much  
more illustrious Manner than I did for-  
merly to your Fathers. For I will send  
my Messenger, who shall come in the Spirit, Luk. i. 17.  
and Power of Elias, a Person in Power,  
Dignity, and Office, like unto him, to  
prepare the Way before me, to make  
ready a People prepar'd for the Lord,  
by Preaching, and baptizing them unto Matth. iii.  
Repentance. And then the Lord whom 11.  
ye seek, and enquire after, that divine  
Person, who subsists in the Unity of the  
same Nature, and Essence with the Fa-  
ther, and the Blessed Spirit, the Eternal  
Son, or Word of God, the Immanuel, the  
Lord, your Righteousness, the Mighty God,  
the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace,  
whose Throne is for ever, and ever, who  
in the Beginning laid the Foundation of the  
Earth; and the Heavens are the Work of  
his Hands; the great Mediator between  
God and Man, that divine Angel, who  
confirm'd the Covenant, in the Promise of  
his Coming unto Abraham, who appear'd  
so often unto the Patriarchs, convers'd  
with Moses, conducted your Fathers out  
of Egypt, gave them the Law on Mount  
Sinai, led them through the Wilderness  
into Canaan, and there dwelt among them



“ in a miraculous Manner in the Taber-  
 “ nacle, and Temple; even that Lord, to  
 “ whom this your Temple is dedicated, and  
 “ the Service thereof appropriated; he,  
 “ even he, in the Fulness of Time, shall be  
 “ made Flesh, and dwell in the World, and  
 “ shall come into this his Temple before it  
 “ is destroy’d, and all Men shall see his  
 “ Glory: And blessed, and happy shall all  
 “ they be who believe in him, and observe  
 “ his Laws; but wretched, and miserable  
 “ shall be the Condition of all such, as re-  
 “ ject those last Offers of Life and Salvation,  
 “ which he shall then make to the World,  
 “ who will not believe in him, and obey his  
 “ Gospel”. That this is the true Import  
 and Meaning of the Words of this Prophecy  
 will, I hope, appear in the Sequel of this  
 Discourse; the Subject-Matter whereof  
 shall be the Mediatorial Kingdom of the Son  
 of God, here stil’d, *The Angel of the Covenant*;  
 or that Sovereign Power and Authority,  
 which, upon the Fall of Man, was com-  
 mitted unto him, the Second Person of the  
 Ever-blessed Trinity, and has been exercis’d,  
 and administer’d by him in the Government  
 of his Church, and the Protection, and Pre-  
 servation of all True Believers, both before,  
 and in, and since the Time of his Manifes-  
 tation in the Flesh, and shall continue so to  
 be till the End and Consummation of all  
 Things; *when all Things being subdued unto*  
*him,*

him, and having put down all other Rule, and all Authority and Power, whether of Men, or Devils, that opposeth itself to God and his Church; he shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, that from thenceforth God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, may be All in All, by a full, and immediate Communication of himself to, and an intimate Union with all his Saints, governing, and influencing all Things immediately by himself, and without the Intervention of a Mediator, as the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 15. 24, &c. And this, inasmuch as all our Right and Title to Heaven, and Happiness, to Communion and Fellowship with God, to Grace here, and Glory hereafter, is wholly and solely founded upon, and derived from it, is a Subject that well deserves the Attention, and serious Consideration of every Christian, and will afford a proper Entertainment for our Meditations at all Times, especially in this Holy Season, which is appointed for a more solemn Commemoration of this Divine Person, the Son of God's Coming into the World, to mediate our Peace and Reconciliation with the Father. And, in treating of this important Subject, I shall pursue this Method, and shew,

First, That immediately upon the Sin of our first Parents, God was pleas'd to new-model his Government over Man, and



establiſh a New Covenant of Grace and Mercy with him, with eaſier, and more favourable Terms and Conditions of obtaining Life and Salvation.

Secondly, That the Sovereignty, and Administration of this new Government over Man, eſtabliſh'd upon the Covenant of Grace, was committed unto God the Son, or God the Redeemer, as Mediator of that Covenant, to require, and reward the Obſervance of it, and puniſh the Violation thereof, that in, and by him, and through his Mediation all the Effects and Conſequences of that Covenant, i. e. the Rewards and Punishments annex'd to it, might be derived from God to Man.

Thirdly, That the Divine Perſon, God the Son, or God the Redeemer, did accordingly in all Ages, both before, and under the Law, actually exerciſe this Mediatorial and Kingly Power thus committed to him, in providing for, and governing his Spiritual Kingdom, the Church of God, and all the Members of it incorporated into that Covenant, whereof he was the Mediator.

Fourthly, That our Lord Jeſus, the Chriſt, or Meſſiah, here called, **THE ANGEL OF THE COVENANT**, who, 'tis fore-

foretold, shou'd come to his Temple, and who, about Four Hundred Years after, did come accordingly, was that same Divine Person, who so presided over and govern'd his Church, the Eternal Son of God, or God the Redeemer.

Fifthly, I shall consider the most material Objections that I have found made, either by the Socinians, or others, to any of the main Branches of this Doctrine; And,

Sixthly, I shall draw some Inferences from the whole, that may serve both to direct our Faith, and influence our Practice.

First, I am to show, That immediately upon the Sin of our first Parents, God was pleas'd to alter and new-model his Government over Man, and establish a New Covenant of Grace and Mercy with him, with easier, and more favourable Terms and Conditions of obtaining Life and Salvation, suitable to the weak and degenerate State into which he was fallen.

The Government which God exercis'd over Man, while he continued in his first and perfect State, was founded in that absolute Sovereignty, and Dominion which he had over him in Right of Creation, as the sole Author, Giver, and Preserver of his Being: And the Laws of this Government were suited, and adapted to the Ends for which  
God



God created him, and proportioned to those Perfections of Nature which he had endow'd him withal; that by continuing in perfect and unfinning Obedience to them, he might glorify the infinite Goodness, and Power, and Wisdom of God, which exhibited themselves in his Creation, and thereby enjoy the Continuance of Communion with God, and Everlasting Life, or else forfeit all Title to that Blessedness, and incur the heavy Displeasure of his Maker, and all the dreadful Effects and Consequences of it by his Disobedience, and that both for himself and his Posterity, whose Head and Representative he was.

Now these Laws, which were the Rule of Man's Obedience, and God's Government over him, were either *Moral* or *Positive*. The former were those Eternal Rules of Righteousness and Holiness, written by the Finger of God upon the Table of his Heart, and founded in those essential and necessary Differences of Good and Evil, discoverable by the Light of natural Reason; whereby he knew himself oblig'd to pay an entire Fealty and Allegiance to his Maker, to do all such Things as a just and holy God must approve of, and be pleas'd with in his Creatures, and refrain from whatever might displease him, as opposite to, and disagreeable with the Purity and Holiness of his own Divine Nature. Of the latter Sort, the Matter whereof

whereof it is not intrinsically, and in its own Nature good or evil, but indifferent, and receives its Obligation wholly from the Will and Authority of the Legillator, we read of but one given to *Adam*, and thnt was the Prohibition to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; with this dreadful Sanction, the Denunciation of Death both temporal and eternal, which he thou'd undergo, in Case of Disobedience. And this Positive Law, we may presume, was enjoyn'd by God, partly to signify the absolute Authority he had over Man, to exact Obedience from him even in Things indifferent, and partly to try his Heart, whether he wou'd submit his Will and Understanding to his Maker, and resign up himself entirely to the Wisdom and Will of God. Now this Law was clearly reveal'd to him immediately by God himself: He knew the Allegiance he owed to his Maker bound him to obey all his Injunctions: The Observance of it was easy; the Fruit of one Tree only, among all the delightful Variety that the Garden was furnish'd with, was forbidden him: He was well appriz'd of the sad Consequences of his Disobedience; and lastly, it was in his Power to refrain; all the Powers of Darknes cou'd not lay any Force or Necessity upon him to yield to their Temptations. So that the transgressing this Law was not so slight a Matter, as some may be apt to imagine.

It



It was a Complication of many heinous Sins, Contempt of the Divine Authority, an open Affront to, or Distrust of God's Justice, and Ingratitude to his Maker. But however we find, alas! that Satan tempted our first Parents to disobey God, and prevailed. They did eat of the Forbidden Fruit, and thereby became obnoxious to that Punishment, which God had threaten'd to inflict upon them for the Violation of his Law. And here, how sad and disconsolate may we imagine was the State of these poor wretched Sinners, when the incens'd Judge of Heaven and Earth call'd them to Account for the Breach of his Commandment; while they stood before him, trembling under the Sense of their Guilt, and the Apprehension of the terrible Judgment, which they expected to have immediately denounc'd against, and inflicted upon them. And if God Almighty had now proceeded against Man according to those Laws, which, 'till then, were the Rule of his Government over him, if a powerful and satisfactory Mediation had not interven'd, moving and inclining him to exercise that transcendent and absolute Power, which, as supreme Lord and Legislator, he had over his own Laws, to mitigate the Rigour thereof, and dispense with them in his judicial Proceedings upon Offenders, to alter the Form of his Government, and propose new Laws,

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as the Rule and Measure of the Obedience he wou'd accept of for the future; if this, I say, had not been done, that once noble Creature had been lost and undone, and perish'd eternally; there being no Promise of Pardon, no Hopes of Reconciliation, no Place for Repentance according to the Nature and Tenure of this first Government.

But as God Almighty had already, on other Occasions, manifested the Glory of the rest of his Divine Attributes; his infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, in the Creation of the World; his Sovereignty, Righteousness and Holiness, in those just and holy Laws which he had given to Angels and Men, as Rules of their Obedience; and his Justice and Severity against Sin, in the Punishment of those Apostate Spirits that rebell'd against him; so now it seem'd good to his infinite Wisdom to give this first Manifestation of those other, no less glorious, Attributes of his Divine Nature, his Grace, and Mercy, and tender Compassion, and Readiness to pardon and forgive his Creatures, which in none of his Works had yet exerted themselves. Hereupon he was moved, upon the Mediation of his Son in Behalf of lost Man, and his engaging, and obliging himself to satisfy the Divine Justice, by taking his Nature upon him, and therein suffering, and dying for him when the Fulness of Time shou'd come, to mitigate the  
Rigour



Rigour of the Sentence, which in Justice he might have fully inflicted upon him, to establish a New Covenant with Man, and new-model his Government over him, prescribing new Laws, and new Terms of Obedience, and Conditions of regaining his Favour, and avoiding the full Execution of the Curse denounc'd against Sin.

A full and perfect Discovery of this great Change made in God's Government of Man, and of the new Terms and Methods of Salvation consequent upon it, was not made indeed, 'till the Son of God was manifest in the Flesh, to perfect the Revelation of his Will to Men, and compleat the great Work of their Redemption. It was not done at once, but gradually, Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως, as the Apostle speaks, by little and little, and in divers Manners; first, more obscurely to our first Parents themselves, and from them to the old World; then more clearly, in confirming the Covenant to *Abraham*; and after that still more plainly, by *Moses* and the Prophets under the Law; 'till at last he has now by his Son made known to us these great Mysteries of the Kingdom of God. So that taking our Prospect from the Advance-ground which we have attain'd to under the Gospel, we have sufficient Light to discover to us the gradual Manifestations, that the Wisdom of God has thought fit to make

make of this great and important Truth, which we are now speaking of.

The first Intimation we have of this new Divine Oeconomy, is contain'd in the Promise of the Messiah, subjoin'd to the Curse denounc'd against Satan, *Gen. 3. 15.* That *God wou'd put Enmity between him and the Woman, and between his Seed and her Seed; and that the Seed of the Woman shou'd bruise his Head:* In which Words is evidently imply'd a Promise of a twofold Deliverance; first, *from Sin*, by dissolving that Confederacy, and League of Friendship which our first Parents had enter'd into and engag'd in with Satan, by believing his false Suggestions, and yielding to his Temptations: And secondly, *from the Power and Tyranny* which he had usurp'd, and wou'd have exercis'd over them by the Conquest which the Saviour to come, peculiarly stiled the *Seed of the Woman*, shou'd make upon the Tempter, by bruising *his Head* which had contrived their Ruin and Destruction.

It must be confest, that the Alteration of God's Government over Man, and establishing a new Covenant of Grace in the Hands of a Mediator, are not explicitly contain'd in the Words of the Promise: But that thus much is necessarily imply'd in them, is evident, I think, beyond Contradiction. For,

*First*, If God had dealt with Man now according to the Tenure and Laws of his first



first Government, which requir'd perfect and unfinning Obedience, under Pain of Death both Temporal and Eternal, it cannot be suppos'd, without derogating from the Justice and Veracity of God, but that the Sentence of Death in the full Extent, and according to the utmost Rigour of it, must have immediately been executed upon the Offenders. But the Sentence, you find, is respited, and the Severity of the Punishments denounc'd against their Sin abated. And this Suspension and Mitigation of the Punishment does necessarily suppose an Alteration made in the Laws and Methods of God's Government, and the Intervention of some new Overtures satisfactory to his Justice and Truth, that induc'd him to deal thus mercifully with our laps'd Parents, and make this Promise of Relief and Restitution from their Misery.

*Secondly,* That the Covenant of Grace was virtually implied in this Promise of a Saviour and Deliverer, appears plainly from hence: Many holy Persons both before, and under the *Mosaic Dispensation* had this Testimony given them, that *they pleas'd God, and were accepted of him*; Job is said to have been perfect and upright: Noah was a righteous Man; David says he, was upright before God; and of Zacharias and Elizabeth it is said, that they were both righteous before God, &c. Now it is evident that they cou'd not

Job i. 1.  
Pf. xviii.  
23.

Luke i. 6.

be

be reputed just and upright in the Sight of God, or find Acceptance with him by the Works of the Law; neither first of the Law of Creation, or the Law of Nature, because the Scripture hath *concluded all under Sin*, so that they cou'd not come up to that Measure of Obedience, which that Law, 'till qualify'd by the Mercies of the Covenant of Grace, did require: Nor, 2<sup>dly</sup>, by the Works of the Law of Moses, because, as St. Paul argues all along through his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, *no Man cou'd be justified in the Sight of God, i. e. absolv'd and acquitted from the Guilt of his Sin, by the Works of that Law*; all its Expiatory Sacrifices being of no further Efficacy, than only to free Men from the Obligation to temporal Punishments, but cou'd never exempt them from the Punishments of another Life: In this Sense it was *impossible that the Blood of Bulls and Goats shou'd take away Sin*. It must have been therefore only upon the Terms of the Covenant of Grace, and through Faith in the Messias to come, here promis'd, that all good Men of old, whether in Circumcision or Uncircumcision, were justified and accepted of God; having the Merits of that Sacrifice, which he was to offer up to God in his own Person for their Sins and the Sins of the whole World, imputed to them for the Pardon of their Sins, and their Acceptance with God: To typifie and pre-

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figure which meritorious Sacrifice, and to propagate the Knowledge, to preserve the Remembrance, and keep up a comfortable Expectation of it in the Minds of Men, there's no Doubt but all Propitiatory Sacrifices had their Institution, as standing Memorials of that great and only true Propitiation to all Ages; tho' in Process of Time the Reason thereof might generally be forgot, both among the Jews and Gentiles. Seeing then in all Nations, and in all Ages of the World, *Acts x. 35.* *he that fear'd God, and wrought Righteousness was accepted with him,* as St. Peter speaks, and seeing this cou'd not be, but through the Merits of the Death of Christ, here promis'd by God upon the Fall of Man, and the Covenant of Grace founded and establish'd upon that Promise; it follows from thence that they are coeval and coincident with each other; and that the Covenant was imply'd in the Promise. But,

*Thirdly,* This will yet more evidently appear, if we consider the Renewal of this Promise afterwards unto Abraham, and the Sense of the Scriptures upon it. When the Church of God founded upon this Promise of a Saviour and Deliverer, was almost wholly extinguish'd through the general Defection and Apostacy of Mankind, it pleas'd God to call Abraham, and renew this Promise with him --- *Gen. xii 3.* *That in his Seed all the Families*

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milie of the Earth shou'd be blessed, and that he wou'd bless them that blessed him, and curse them that cursed him; renewing the Curse against Satan that had accompany'd the first Promise. Now this Renewal of the Promise to Abraham, is expressly called by the Apostle, the confirming of the Covenant, which plainly supposes it to have been in Being before, and included in that Promise: Which, being general, and not limited before to any particular Person or Family, was now confin'd to the Stock and Lineage of Abraham; as the Church itself, founded upon that Covenant and Promise, also was, as to the ordinary and visible Dispensation of the Grace of God. Nay further, this Promise is not only called the Covenant, but the confirming it to Abraham is stiled by the same Apostle, Ver. 8, *The Preaching of the Gospel unto him*: — *The Scripture* [i.e. the Holy Ghost in Scripture] *foreseeing that God wou'd justify the Heathen through Faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed.* Intimating, that the Gospel, as it exhibits to us the Mercies of God in our Lord Jesus Christ, is but a large Comment, amplifying and dilating the Sense of that first Promise made to Adam, and afterwards renew'd unto Abraham; and that all the Hopes which Mankind, whether before, or under, or since the Law of Moses, had, or

Gal. iii.  
17.



have of the Pardon of Sin, of Peace and Reconciliation with God, and Eternal Life; are deriv'd originally from that Promise, and the Covenant of Grace establish'd upon it. It was a Summary of all Evangelical Blessings and Privileges held forth to good Men in all Ages, tho' more clearly manifested to us by the coming of that great Deliverer which was promised, and the Light of the Gospel which by his Blessing we enjoy.

And now, seeing the Covenant renew'd with *Abraham*, was only a Confirmation or Appropriation of the Covenant made with Mankind in general immediately upon the Fall, in the Promise of the Messiah, and seeing the Gospel-Covenant is the same with that made with *Abraham*, as exhibiting the same Spiritual Promises, and requiring the same Conditions of an obediential and practical Faith, in Order to Justification, and Acceptance with God, it follows from hence, 1<sup>st</sup>, That the Covenant of Grace, tho' different as to its external Appendances, and the Degrees of its Manifestation, nevertheless in Essence and Substance is, and has been the same ever since the Fall of Man; and consequently, 2<sup>dly</sup>, That the Church of God, or Society of true Believers was likewise ever the same in all Ages, being built upon the same Covenant, founded upon the same Promise of the great Deliverer, which God wou'd

send

send for the Redemption of Mankind, and repairing the Ruines which humane Nature had suffer'd by the Fall.

Thus you have seen, that immediately upon the Fall of Man, when he had thereby put himself under an absolute Incapacity of ever recovering the Happiness he had forfeited by his Disobedience, of regaining Favour and Acceptance with God, or preventing the Eternal Ruin and Misery he was doom'd to, upon the Terms of the first Covenant, or Covenant of Works, which requir'd perfect and unfinning Obedience, without any Promise of Pardon, either for his past, or subsequent Transgressions, God, out of his infinite Mercy and Goodness, was pleas'd to new-model his Government, to qualify and lessen the Rigour of his Laws, and establish a new Covenant of Grace and Mercy with him, in the Promise of the Messiah, with new Overtures of Life and Salvation, upon Terms and Conditions more easy, and accommodated to the weak and imperfect State to which Sin had reduc'd him: And that it is only in, and through this Covenant, founded upon the Merits of Christ's suffering for us, that the Church of God, *i. e.* all true Believers, whether before, or under, or since the Law of *Moses*, have had Access to God, and a Title to Heaven and Eternal Life. And this was the first Thing



I propos'd to prove. I proceed now in the next Place to shew,

Secondly, That the Sovereignty and Administration of this new Government over Man, establish'd upon the Covenant of Grace, was committed unto God the Son, or God Redeemer, as Mediator of that Covenant, to require and reward the Observance, and punish the Violation thereof; that in, and by him, and through his Mediation, all the Effects and Consequences of that Covenant, i. e. the Rewards and Punishments annex'd to it, might be derived from God to Man. There seems to be more than a Probability that the whole Transaction with our first Parents after the Fall, the summoning, and passing Sentence upon them, together with that comfortable Promise of a Saviour or Deliverer consequent thereupon, is to be ascrib'd to that Divine Person, God the Son, or God Redeemer, as then actually taking upon himself the Administration of this new Government, the Mediatorial and Kingly Office committed unto him by the Father: Seeing upon God's coming down from Heaven for these Purposes, the Text tells us, That Adam and Eve heard the Voice of the Lord God walking in the Garden. In which Words it is observable, that the Participle *Walking* may refer to the *Voice*, as well as *God*; and accordingly the Chaldee Paraphrast renders them thus — And they heard the Voice of

Gen. iii. 8.

of the Word of the Lord walking in the Garden: It being usual, at the Time when that Paraphrase was made, for Men to express their Conceptions of the second Person of the Holy Trinity by that Name of the *ὁ λόγος τῆς θεῆς*, or the Word of God. But however this be, 'tis very evident his Mediatorial and Kingly Office did commence at that Time. Man's Communion with God was interrupted and broken off through Sin; and tho' he was restored upon the Terms of the New Covenant, yet God wou'd not admit of such an immediate Intercourse with him as he had before, but determin'd to administer his Government over Man, new-model'd upon the Plan of that New Gospel-Covenant, by his only begotten Son; giving all Things into his Hands; and putting all Things under his Feet, John xiii. 3. that he might be the Head over all unto his Church: For it pleas'd the Father, says the Eph. i. 22. Apostle, that in all Things he shou'd have the Preeminence, that in him shou'd all Fulness dwell, and that by him, having made Peace through the Blood of his Cross, he might reconcile all Things to himself, whether they be Things in Earth, or Things in Heaven, [Jews or Gentiles, as Dr. Hammond] and deliver them from the Powers of Darknes, by translating them into the Kingdom of his dear Son. These Powers and Prerogatives are said indeed to have been conferr'd upon him after his Death Coloss. i.



and Resurrection, and upon his Ascension into Heaven, and as the Reward of his Sufferings; but this can only be understood of him in Respect of his Manhood, assum'd and personally united to his God-Head, and admitted, in Vertue of that Union, to a Participation of *that Glory, which he had with the Father before the Foundation of the World.* But as the Eternal Son of God, *Jesus Christ,* as the Apostle says, *Heb. 13. 8. is the same Yesterday, to-Day, and for ever;* the same Head and Ruler of his Church, the same common Mediator between God and Man in all Ages of the World, past, present, and to come: He did not indeed actually assume our Nature, and therein satisfy the Divine Justice, by performing a perfect Obedience to the Law, and suffering, and dying for us, and in our Stead, 'till the appointed Time came; but his promising and engaging to do all this for us, was as sure a Foundation for God Almighty to proceed upon, as if it had been actually perform'd. And therefore all the Benefits and Advantages that accru'd to Mankind from thence, were equally communicated in all Ages, in Vertue of his Mediation and Stipulation with the Father, as well to those that by Faith waited for the Promises to come, as those that have seen the Accomplishment of them since his Coming in the Flesh, and his actually offering

ing up himself on the Cross for us. And thus, as to the Extent and Application of the salutary Effects of that Sacrifice, he is called the *Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World*. And St. Paul expressly ascribes the *Redemption for the Transgressions under the Law*, to the Mediation and Death of Christ. Heb. 9. 15. And St. Peter says, Acts 15. 11. that *through the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they, i. e. the Fathers who lived before his Manifestation in the Flesh*. Rev. xiii. 8.

Since the Covenant of Grace then was establish'd, upon the first Entrance of Sin into the World, and has continued the same, as to all the beneficial Effects and Fruits of it, ever since, and was founded in the Promise of the Messiah, and in Prospect of that Propitiation and Atonement which the Son of God was to make for us by his Death and Passion; this shews plainly that his Mediatorial Office must have been coeval, and commenc'd with that Covenant; and that all Transactions between God and his Church must have been ever since under the Direction and Management, and by the Mediation of the Son of God. And so we find in the Words of this Prophecy, spoken Four Hundred Years before his Incarnation, he is called the *Angel or Prince of the Covenant*, for so the *Hebrew* may be rendred. Nay,  
St. Paul



St. Paul tells us, Gal. 3. 17. that it was confirmed in Christ, [and that must be as Mediator] Four Hundred and Thirty Years before the Delivery of the Law on Mount Sinai: For this I say, that the Covenant that was confirmed before in Christ [i. e. in the Renewal of the first Promise of him unto Abraham] the Law which was Four Hundred and Thirty Years after, [and which, in Truth, was but in the Nature of a Codicil annex'd to that Covenant, and relating only to temporal Blessings and Promises] cannot disannul, so as to make it void and of none Effect.

But further, unto this Mediatorial Office of the Son of God, which consisted in procuring and applying the Benefits of the Covenant of Grace to his Church, there was annex'd the Royal Sovereignty and Administration of that new Government, which, I have shewn, commenc'd upon the Fall of Man; he was appointed to rule and govern his Church, as its Lord and King, 'till the End and Consummation of all Things, when, having finish'd the last Act of his Kingly Office in distributing Eternal Rewards and Punishments to all his Subjects, this new Government over Man shall cease, and he shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be All in all. But,

for

for the Proof of this Point, because it will more fully appear in the further Prosecution of this Argument, I shall trespass no further upon your Patience at present than in producing only one Instance; which is in the Hundred and Tenth Psalm, Ver. 1. *The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my Right-Hand 'till I make thine Enemies thy Foot-stool.* The Word *Lord* in Scripture does necessarily connote Power and Dominion, and a Right to govern in the Person to whom it is ascrib'd; and as *Messiah*, or *Christ*, or the *Son of God*, are Terms æquipollent, and of the same Import and Signification in the New Testament, so *King* and *Lord* were in the Old: *The King, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee, Zeph. 3. 15.* Now that that Divine Person, whom *David* here calls his *Lord*, [and of whose Throne, and the Sceptre of whose Kingdom he speaks, Psalm 45. 7.] was no other than our Blessed Saviour, we have his own Testimony, *Matth. 22. 42, &c.* and that not as the *Son of David*, as he there demonstrates to the *Jews*, but as the *Eternal Son of God*. But this shall suffice to be said on this second Head, viz. That the *Sovereignty and Administration of God's Government over Man*, new-modell'd upon the *Entrance of Sin into the World*, and establish'd



bliss'd upon the Covenant of Grace then made, was committed unto God the Son, or God Redeemer, as Mediator of that Covenant, to require and reward the Observance, and punish the Violation thereof; that in, and by him, and through his Mediation all the Effects and Consequences of that Covenant, i. e. the Rewards and Punishments annex'd to it, might be deriv'd from God to Mankind.

I shou'd now proceed to the Third Point propos'd to be spoken to, but that, &c.



# SERMON VII.

## Of the Angel of the Covenant, and the Mediatorial Kingdom of Christ.



MALACHI iii. I.

*Behold, I will send my Messenger, and he shall prepare the Way before me. And the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his Temple, even the Angel of the Covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

**I**N discoursing on these Words, I propos'd to establish some Points of Doctrine concerning the Mediatorial Kingdom of Christ, the Son of God, or that Sovereign Power and Authority, which, upon the Entrance of Sin into the World, was committed unto him by the Father,



Father, and has been exercis'd and administered by him ever since, in the Government of his Church, and shall continue so to be to the End and Consummation of all Things. Now, the Points that I undertook to make out for the clearing this important Subject, on which all our Title to Heaven and Happiness, all our Pretensions to Communion and Fellowship with God, all our Hopes of Grace here, and Glory hereafter, do wholly depend, are these,

First, That immediately upon the Entrance of Sin into the World, God was pleas'd to new-model his Government over Man, and establish a New Covenant of Grace and Mercy with him, with easier, and more favourable Terms and Conditions of obtaining Life and Salvation than before, adapted to the weak and imperfect State, which the Fall had brought him to.

Secondly, That the Sovereignty, and Administration of this new Government over Man, establish'd by the Covenant of Grace, was committed unto God the Son, or God the Redeemer, as Mediator of that Covenant, to require, and reward the Observance of it, and punish the Violation thereof, that in, and by him, and through his Mediation all the Effects and Consequences of that Covenant, i. e. the Rewards

wards and Punishments annex'd to it, might be derived from God to Man.

Thirdly, That this Divine Person, God the Son, or God the Redeemer, did accordingly in all Ages, both before, and under the Law, actually exercise this Mediatorial and Kingly Power thus committed to him, in providing for, and governing his Spiritual Kingdom, the Church of God, and all the Members of it incorporated into that Covenant, whereof he was the Mediator.

Fourthly, That our Lord Jesus, the Christ, or Messiah, here called, **THE ANGEL OF THE COVENANT**, who, 'tis foretold, shou'd come to his Temple, and who, about Four Hundred Years after, did come accordingly, was that same Divine Person, who so presided over and govern'd his Church, the Eternal Son of God, or God the Redeemer.

Fifthly, I propos'd to consider the most material Objections I cou'd find made, either by the Socinians, or others, to any of the main Branches of this Doctrine.

Sixthly, To draw some Inferences from the whole, that may serve both to direct our Faith, and influence our Practice,

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The Two first of these Heads I have spoke to already, I come now to make out what I undertook to prove in the next Place. Now,

Thirdly, *That this Divine Person, God the Redeemer, in all Ages, both before, and under the Law, did accordingly actually exercise this Mediatorial and Kingly Power thus committed unto him, in presiding over, and governing his spiritual Kingdom, the Church of God, and all the Members thereof incorporated into that Covenant, whereof he was the Mediator.*

And in Order to the establishing the Truth of this Position, I shall shew, that the Angel so often spoken of in the Old Testament, under the Title and Character of *Jehovah*, and the *Angel of Jehovah*, and the *Angel of God's Presence*, and the *Angel of the Covenant*, as here in my Text; who appear'd so frequently, about Matters relating to the Government, Protection, and Preservation of the Church of God, unto the Patriarchs, unto *Moses*, and other holy Men of old; who brought the Children of *Israel* out of *Aegypt*, conducted them through the Wilderness, gave them the Law on Mount *Sinai*, and afterwards resided in a wonderful Manner among them in the Tabernacle and Temple, as their Lord and King, was no Creature, no Angel by Nature; but truly and essentially God, God the Son, or God the Redeemer. From whence if it can be fairly

fairly made out,) the Proposition before laid down, and which I am now to speak to, will follow as a direct and necessary Conclusion.

That this was the settled and current Doctrine of the Catholic Church, particularly in the Three first and purest Ages of it, a Learned Bishop of this Church has plainly prov'd in the first Chapter of the first Section of his Excellent Defence of the *Nicene Faith*, from the Testimonies of *Justin Martyr*, *Ireneus*, *Theophilus of Antioch*, *Clement of Alexandria*, *Tertullian*, *Cyprian*, &c. and other learn'd Men of this, and other Nations, have confirm'd the Truth of it, by shewing the exact and uniform Agreement of it with the Opinions and Sentiments of the Ancient *Jews*: However, some of the *Papists* and the *Socinians*, upon different Views, and to support their particular Errors, have struck in with the modern *Jews*, in making that Divine Angel to be no more than a Creature, or an Angel by Nature, and dignify'd with those Titles and Characters so frequently ascrib'd to him, only as he represented the True God, and acted in his Name, and by his Authority. Hereby the Former think to establish their Idolatrous Worshipping and Praying to Angels; and the Latter, to avoid the Arguments drawn from hence to prove that fundamental Article of our Christian Faith, the Eternal

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Existence



Existence and Divinity of Christ the Son of God.

Now in the Illustration of this great and important Truth, there are Three Things which I shall take for granted : As,

*First*, That *Jehovah* is the incommunicable Name of God, which no created Being can assume to himself without robbing God of that Honour which is peculiarly due to him, which he is *jealous of*, and *will not give to another*. The Psalmist says expressly, *that Jehovah is the Name of the most High God only* — *That Men may know that thou whose Name alone is JEHOVAH, art the Most High over all the Earth* : To which such a profound Veneration was pay'd by the *Jews*, that it was never allow'd to be pronounc'd by any Person whatsoever, excepting the High-Priest; nor by him neither, save only once a Year, when he enter'd into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Expiation, to pray for a Blessing from God upon his People.

Ps. lxxxiii.  
18.

*Secondly*, I take for granted, that the essential Properties of the Divine Nature are likewise incommunicable to any inferiour Being, and cannot be attributed but to God only.

*Thirdly*, I take it also for granted, that no Religious Worship can be paid to any Creature whatever, without Idolatry, and robbing God of what is only due to him : As  
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and the Mediatorial Kingdom of Christ. 179

the Angel told St. John, Rev. 22: 9 when he fell down at his Feet to worship him; *See thou do it not, I am thy Fellow-servant.*

Now, these Principles being granted, if it shall be made appear, that this Angel, which we are now speaking of, has the incommunicable Name and Attributes of God ascrib'd to him, and Divine Worship and Adoration paid him, it must be allow'd, that he was no Creature, no Angel by Nature, but truly and essentially God; and that the Case is so, a short and summary Account of some of his most remarkable Appearances recorded in the Old Testament, will sufficiently evince.

The first Instance we have of this extraordinary Angel's Appearing (I mean under that Character and Designation) is in Gen. 16. where he comes to comfort Sarah's Handmaid in her Distress, when she had fled from the Face of her Mistress. In the 7th, 9th, 10th, and 11th Verses, he is stiled, *the Angel of Jehovab*, and yet, he pronounces a Blessing upon her in his own Name, v. 10. *I will multiply thy Seed*; and v. 13. is called also *Jehovab and God*; *And she called the Name of Jehovab that spake unto her, thou God that seest me.* Again, Chap. 18. ver. 2. Three Angels appear'd unto Abraham in the Plains of Mamre. He look'd, and lo, three Men stood by him. i. e. three Angels in humane Shape, not discover'd by Abraham at first to be such; according to that Allusion of St. Paul to this

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Place,



Place, Heb. 13. 2. where he bids them, not to be forgetful to entertain Strangers, because some have entertain'd Angels unawares. And yet, Ver. 1. it is said, *Jehovah* appear'd unto him: And when he addresses himself to, and enters into Communication with one of those Three, concerning the Conception of Sarah, and the Destruction of Sodom, he is six several Times called *Jehovah*; and Ver. 25. *Abraham* calls him, the Judge of Heaven and Earth; and Chap. 21. 2. The God that spake to him; --- And Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a Son in his Old Age, at the set Time which God had spoke to him. So again, Ch. 22. When God, for the Tryal and Manifestation of the Firmness of this holy Man's Faith, commanded him to offer up his Son upon Mount Moriah, a Hill on the Side of Mount Sion; that remarkable Place where David first erected an Altar in the Time of the Pestilence, in the Threshing-Floor of Araunah the Jebusite, and Solomon afterwards built the Temple; and in, or near unto which Place, the Son of God offer'd up himself a Sacrifice upon the Cross for the Sins of the World; and when Abraham, in Obedience to the Divine Command, stretch'd out his Hand to slay his Son; Ver. 11. The Angel of *Jehovah* called to him out of Heaven, and forbade him: For I know, says he, Ver. 12. that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy Son, thine only Son from me: Which plainly intimates

mates, that the Sacrifice was design'd to be to the same Person who is here called, the *Angel of Jehovah*, and that the Ram was offer'd up to him as a Burnt-Offering, in lieu of Isaac. And Ver. 16. the same Person *sweareth by himself*, is called *Jehovah*, and reneweth the Covenant with *Abraham*. So also *Gen. 28.* that same Divine Person, who appear'd in a Dream to *Jacob*, who is called *Jehovah*, and the *God of Abraham*, and *Isaac*, Ver. 13. in Respect of whom, he calls the Place *Bethel*, i. e. the House of God, Ver. 19. to whom he offers Sacrifice, Ver. 18. and makes a Vow, that he shou'd be his God, Ver. 21. The same Person, I say, [Chap. 31. 11.] is called the *Angel of Jehovah*, and all that was done at *Bethel* is recited and ascrib'd to him. The *Angel of Jehovah* tells him, Ver. 13. *I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the Pillar, and where thou vowedst a Vow unto me, &c.* So likewise, *Gen. 32.* from this Divine Angel's Appearing to him at *Mahanaim*, and wrestling with him all Night, as he was passing into *Canaan*, *Jacob* called the Place *Peniel*, i. e. the Face or Presence of God, because he had seen God Face to Face, Ver. 30. and Ver. 28. He had the Name of *Israel* given him; because, as a Prince, he had Power with God, and prevail'd. And having Occasion to mention this again, upon his Blessing the Children of *Joseph*, *Gen. 48. 15, 16.* he calls him ——— The God before whom his Fa-



thers, Abraham and Isaac, did walk, the God who fed him all his Life long, the Angel who redeem'd him from all Evil: Plainly referring (as appears from Ver. 2. and 3. of this Chapter) to what had pass'd at Bethel or Luz, and the Blessing, which the Angel of Jehovah pronounc'd there upon him, Ch. 28. 13, 14, 15. And here you'll be pleas'd to observe, that the Angel, to whom Jacob prays for a Blessing upon his Grand-Children Ephraim and Manasses, has this high Character given him, of his Redeemer from all Evil, which cannot be understood of any mere Creature, or Angel by Nature, without supposing Jacob guilty of a complicate Act of Idolatry and Sacrilege, in making a Creature the direct and immediate Object of his Prayer; and 2<sup>dly</sup>, in ascribing to a Creature the Title of Redeemer, which is peculiarly appropriated unto God in the Holy Scripture, as *Isaiah* 43. 14, 15. Thus saith the Lord your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, — I am the Lord your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King: And again, Chap. 47. Ver. 4. As for our Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts is his Name, the Holy One of Israel: And Chap. 54. Ver. 5, 6. Thy Maker is thine Husband, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole Earth, &c. And so Lastly, Chap. 63. 16. Thou, O Lord, art our Father and Redeemer, thy Name is from Everlasting. Which plainly shews, that this Angel, who redeem'd Ja-

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cob from all Evil, cou'd be no other than God, the Holy One of *Israel*, to whom only this Character of Redeemer can be applied. That Passage of the Prophet *Hosea*, 12. 3, 4, 5. which refers to this and the preceding History is very remarkable; where speaking of *Jacob*, he says, — *By his Strength he had Power with God; yea, he had Power over the Angel, and prevail'd: He wept, and made Supplication unto him; he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us, even the Lord God of Hosts.* Here you see the same Things are ascribed to the Angel, and to God, even the Lord of Hosts.

Again, this Divine Angel, who appear'd to *Abraham*, and to *Jacob*, and is promiscuously, you see, called the *Angel of Jehovah*, and *Jehovah*, the God who preserv'd them, to whom they pray'd, and whom they worshipped, was the same Person, who appear'd afterwards to *Moses* in *Horeb*, and promised to bring the Children of *Israel* out of *Egypt*, *Exod.* 3. 2. for he is there called the *Angel of Jehovah*. And the *Angel of Jehovah* appear'd unto *Moses* in a *Flame of Fire*; and makes himself known, as before, by the Name of the God of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, *Ver.* 6. and promises to bring them out of the Afflictions of *Egypt* into the Land of the *Canaanites*, *Ver.* 17. which he does also *Exod.* 6. 6. and founds a Solemn Covenant with them upon that Promise ——— That he



wou'd take them to him for a People, and he wou'd be to them a God. Ver. 7.

Now, as this Divine Angel, who made himself known by the Name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was the same who brought Israel out of Egypt, as has already been prov'd; so it was the same Person still that deliver'd the Law on Mount Sinai. For at the Delivery of the Law, he designs himself by the Character of — *The God that brought them out of Egypt; I am Jehovah thy God, who brought thee out of the Land of Egypt.* And lastly, he who thus appointed the Law to Israel, was also the same Divine Person, who dwelt among them in a most miraculous Manner, first, in the Tabernacle, and afterwards in the Temple: Having his *Shechinah*, or glorious Presence in the Sanctuary; from whence he gave Orders and Directions for the Government of his Church and People, and where the Tribute of their Sacrifices was paid to him as their Lord and King. For he promis'd, *Exod. 29. 43, &c.* That he wou'd sanctifie the Tabernacle, which he had appointed to be made, with his Glory, where he wou'd meet with the Children of Israel, and dwell among them, and be their God, and they shall know, saith he, that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the Land of Egypt: And when the Ark of the Covenant was remov'd out of the Tabernacle into the Temple which

*Solomon*

Solomon had built for the Name of the God of Israel, he vouchsafed to enter into it, and make his Abode there, signified by the Fire's coming down from Heaven, and consuming the Sacrifices, and his filling the House with his Glory; so that the Priests cou'd not enter into the House of the Lord, because the Glory of the Lord had fill'd the Lord's House, as you may read in the Sixth and Seventh Chapters of the Second Book of *Chronicles*.

Thus you have seen, that that *Angel of Jehovab*, to whom the Government of God's Church and People in the foremention'd Instances was committed, is stiled *Jehovab*, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Judge of all the Earth, and Redeemer from all Evil, swears by Himself, and has Religious Worship; Vows, Prayers, and Sacrifices made to him: And you have seen further, that he who made himself known by that Title of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was the same who brought Israel out of Egypt, was the same still who deliver'd the Law on Mount Sinai, and afterwards had his *Shechinah*, his glorious Habitation in the Tabernacle and Temple. So that all these Acts of Blessing, preserving, directing, ordering, and governing his Church must be ascrib'd to one, and the same Person: And since this Person has the incommunicable Name and Attributes of God given and appropriated to him, and Divine Worship and Adoration paid



paid him, it follows, upon the Principles before laid down, that he was no Creature, no Angel by Nature, but truly and essentially God. And what now remains in Order to the full Proof of the Proposition we are upon, is only to shew, that it was the second Person in the Ever-blessed Trinity, God the Son, or God Redeemer.

And for the Proof of this Point (which will be made more clear from what I shall advance upon the next Head) it will be sufficient to observe at present,

*First*, That these Transactions are not applicable to the Person of God the Father. For, besides that his being stiled the *Angel*, or *Messenger of Jehovah*, does necessarily connote a Distinction of his Person from the Person of the Most High God the Father, the Fountain of the Divine Essence, and also some Kind of Subordination in him that was sent, to him that sent him; besides this, 'tis said expressly in *St. John* 1. 18. 6. 46. *That no Man hath seen the Father at any Time*, and yet that those Holy Men, in the Instances I have given, saw God, tho' veil'd in external Forms and Representations, and not in that full Brightness of his Glory, in which we shall behold him in the next World, is very plain: And it is said expressly, *Ex.* 24. that *Moses* and *Aaron*, and *Nadab*, and *Abihu*, and the Seventy Elders, when they were in the Mount, *saw the God of Israel*, Ver, 10.

Which

Which two Scriptures cannot be reconciled without allowing the Divine Person, to whom those visible Appearances are ascribed, to be distinct from the Person of God the Father. And,

*Secondly*, That the *Jewish Church*, before their Enmity to the Christian Faith, and that judicial Blindness to which they were given up, had perverted their Judgments, and made them fall off from their former Principles, did refer these Divine Appearances to the second Person in the Holy Trinity, God the Son, and not to the Holy Spirit, is plain, from the Testimony of those Ancient *Chaldee Paraphrases*, which, with the *Jews*, even to this Day, are almost of equal Authority with the holy Text itself. For, we are sure from the first Chapter of *St. John's Gospel*, that the *λογος*, or *Word of God*, and the Son of God are of the same Import, and denote the same Person: And Learned Men have observ'd, that wherever the Words *Jehovah* and *Elohim* occur in the *Hebrew Text*, the Paraphrasts commonly render it, *Memra da Jehovah*, **THE WORD OF THE LORD**: Thus for Instance, *Gen. 3. 8.* *They heard the Voice of Jehovah in the Garden*, is rendred, *They heard the Voice of the Word of Jehovah*; and *Ver. 9.* *Jehovah, or the Lord God called unto Adam: The Word of Jehovah called unto Adam*: And *Ver. 22.* *And the Lord God said, behold, the Man is become as one of us, to know Good and Evil*, The *Jerusalem Targum*



gum renders, *And the Word of Jehovah said, behold, the Man whom thou hast made, is the only begotten in the World, as I am the only begotten in Heaven.* So Psalm 110. 1. *The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my Right-Hand; the Lord said unto his Word, &c.* says Jonathan, as P. Fagius witnesseth in Deut. 5. And Hos. 1. 7. *I will save them, i. e. the House of Judah, by Jehovah their God, the same Paraphrast renders thus, I will save them by the Word of Jehovah, their God.* And particularly in the Places before quoted, where the same Things which are referr'd to Jehovah, and the Angel of Jehovah, are by those Paraphrasts ascrib'd to the Word: As Gen. 16. 13. where it is said, that Hagar called the Name of Jehovah that spake unto her, *Thou God seest me.* The Chaldee Paraphrast saith, *She confess'd, and pray'd to the Word of the Lord, who had appear'd to her;* and another, *She confess'd before the Lord Jehovah, whose Word had spoken to her.* So Gen. 22. 1. *Jehovah did tempt Abraham,* is render'd, *The Word of Jehovah tempted Abraham:* And Ver. 17. *By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord; by my Word have I sworn, saith the Lord:* And in the next Verse, *And in thy Seed shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed, because thou hast obey'd my Voice, — because thou hast been obedient to my Word.* And in that divine Appearance to Jacob at Bethel, Gen. 28. where the Text says, Ver. 20, 21. That Ja-

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Jacob vow'd a Vow, saying, If God will be with me, and keep me in this Way that I go, &c. then shall the Lord be my God: One of the Chaldee Paraphrases renders it thus, Jacob vow'd a Vow to the Word of Jehovah, saying, if the Word of Jehovah will be my Help, &c. — then shall the Lord be my God. And the same might be shew'd of all the other Instances before mention'd, that what was ascribed to that Divine Person, who is, as you have heard, promiscuously stiled, Jehovah, and the Angel of Jehovah, was by these Ancient and Authentick Paraphrases understood of the second Person in the Holy Trinity, the Word, or Son of God, who was in the beginning with God, and was God; and by whom all Things were made, that were made; and who is over all, God blessed for ever. And that this was the current Opinion of the Ancient Jewish, as well as the Christian Church, might be further evinc'd, both from the Author of the Book of Wisdom, and from Philo the Learned and Famous Jew of Alexandria: The former expressly ascribes the Destruction of the First-born of the Egyptians to the Πανταδύναμος θεῶν λόγος, the Omnipotent Word of God, who came down from Heaven for that Purpose, Chap. 18. 15. As the latter also does all those Divine Appearances to Adam, and Moses, and Abraham, &c. to the same Divine λόγος, whom he calls the αἰδίου ἑικόνα, or Everlasting Image of the Father. But



I shall conclude this Head, with referring you to one remarkable Passage in the Prophet *Isaiah*, relating to this Matter, Chap. 48. 16. where this Divine Person, (according to the Opinion of m<sup>y</sup> Learn'd Expositors) stiled here, as in Rev. 1. 8. 22. 13. *the first and the last*, Ver. 12. says of himself, that as he had revealed the Will of God to Man from the Beginning, so he was sent for that Purpose ——— By the Lord God, and his Spirit.

Isa. xlviii. 16, 17. Come near unto me, hear ye this, I have not spoken in secret from the Beginning, from the Time that it was, there am I; and now the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me. Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am the Lord thy God, which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the Way that thou should'st go. From whence we may conclude with *Tertullian*, in his Sixteenth Book against *Praxeas*, that ——— *Deus interris cum hominibus alius conversari non potuit, quam Sermo qui Caro erat futurus*; it was God the Son only, the Word which was afterwards to be made Flesh, that convers'd with Men in the World; exercising that Sovereign Power and Authority which was committed unto him by the Father upon the Entrance of Sin into the World, as the Mediator of the New Covenant then establish'd between God and Man.

And thus you have seen, that as God was pleased, upon the Entrance of Sin into the World,

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World, to new-model his Government in Favour of fallen Man, to qualifie and mitigate the Rigour of his Laws, upon the Terms and Conditions of the Covenant of Grace, and to commit the Sovereignty and Administration of that new Government unto God the Son, or God Redeemer, so likewise, that that same Divine Person has accordingly, in all Ages, both before, and under the Law, actually exercis'd that Mediatorial and Kingly Power thus committed unto him: Since it has been made (I hope very evidently) appear, that the Angel so often spoken of in the Old Testament, under the Title of *Jehovah*, and the *Angel of Jehovah*, the *Angel of God's Presence*, and the *Angel of the Covenant*, who appear'd so frequently about Matters relating to the Government, Protection, and Preservation of the Church of God, unto the Patriarchs, unto *Moses*, and other holy Men of old; who brought *Israel* out of *Egypt*, conducted them through the Wilderness, gave them the Law on Mount *Sinai*, and afterwards resided in a wonderful Manner among them in the Tabernacle and Temple, was no created Angel, no Angel by Nature, having the incommunicable Name and Attributes of God ascrib'd to him, and Divine Worship, and Adoration paid him, but truly and essentially God, and God the Son, or God Redeemer. But this will appear



pear still more clearly from what I come now to offer in Proof of the next proposition, viz.

Fourthly, That our Lord Jesus, the Christ, or Messiah, whom the Prophet in my Text calls the Angel of the Covenant, and who he foretells shou'd suddenly come to his Temple, and who, about Four Hundred Years after, did come accordingly, was that same Divine Person, who so presided over, and govern'd the Church of God, the Eternal Son, or Word of God, or God-Redeemer; and shall continue so to do 'till the End and Consummation of all Things.

Now, that the Divine Angel, who convers'd with the Patriarchs, made himself known by the Name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the God who brought Israel out of Egypt, who deliver'd the Law on Mount Sinai, and afterwards resided in a miraculous Manner in the Tabernacle and Temple, was the Eternal Word of God, God the Son, or God-Redeemer, has been shew'd already under the foregoing Head: And therefore, if it can be made out, that our Lord Jesus Christ, before his taking our Nature upon him, was that God, who had his Abode, and was worshipp'd, as such, in the Sanctuary, he must be acknowledg'd to be the same Divine Person, who presided over, and govern'd the Church in the Instances be-

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fore-mention'd, even the Eternal Son of God; or God-Redeemer.

Now the 68th Psalm is a Psalm of Praise and Thanksgiving to God, for the many Mercies and Deliverances he had vouchsafed his People, made by David, upon Occasion of bringing up the Ark to Jerusalem, 2 Sam. 6. 12. and the Psalmist, Ver. 2. addresses himself to him, as residing and dwelling in the Tabernacle. *They have seen thy Goings, O God, even the Goings of my God and my King in the Sanctuary;* and Ver. 16. *This is the Hill which God delighteth to dwell in, yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever.* So that whatever Person the Holy Ghost ascribes and appropriates the Words of this Song to, he must be the same with that God to whom they are address'd, who dwelt, and was worshipped in the Sanctuary. And this we find done to our blessed Saviour, Eph. 4. 8. where these Words of the Psalmist, Ver. 18. *Thou hast ascended up on high, thou hast led Captivity captive, thou hast receiv'd Gifts for Men, yea, for the rebellious ones also, that the Lord God might dwell among them,* are expressly ascrib'd to Christ and his Ascension.

Again, Isaiah 6. The Prophet gives us an Account of a Vision which he had of the Glory of God, who dwelt between the Cherubims in the Temple. *In the Year that King Uzziah dyed, I saw, says he, the Lord sitting upon a Throne, high and lifted up, and his Train filled the Temple. Above it stood the Seraphims,*



raphims, &c. And cryed one to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole Earth is full of his Glory. And the Lord said unto him, Ver. 9. Go, and tell this People, Hear ye, indeed, but understand not; and see ye, indeed, but perceive not; make the Heart of this People fat, and make their Ears heavy, and shut their Eyes, lest they shou'd see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and understand with their Hearts, and convert, and be healed. Now, whether this Discovery was made to the Prophet by an external, and sensible Appearance of what he describes, or only in Vision, form'd by the inward Operation of the Divine Spirit in his Mind or Imagination, is not material, perhaps impossible to be known: This is certain, 1<sup>st</sup>, That the Glory which he saw was the Glory of that God, who is said, in a peculiar Manner, to have dwelt between the Cherubims in the Holy of Holies, signifying his more immediate and particular Presence there, by the Cloud of Glory which cover'd the Mercy-Seat, and by giving Answers upon all great Emergencies by the Judgment of Urin and Thummim. And, 2<sup>dly</sup>, It is no less certain, that our blessed Saviour was that God, whose Glory he then saw; for St. John 12. 40. having cited those Words last mention'd, which God then dictated to the Prophet, adds in the next Verse, These things said Isaiah, when he saw his Glory, and spake of him,

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him, i. e. of Christ; of him, who had done so many Miracles among them, and in whom they believ'd not, Ver. 37. and on whom they cou'd not believe, Ver. 39. By the Evangelist we are infallibly assured, that the Prophet saw the Glory of Christ; and the Prophet has as undoubtedly assured us, that he, whose Glory he then saw, was the One Omnipotent and Eternal God; who had his *Shechinah* in the Temple; and consequently, from both together, we have an irrefragable Argument, that Christ did then subsist in the glorious Majesty of the Eternal God-Head; and was that same Divine Person, to whom the Presidency over God's Church was committed, whose the Temple was; as it is said in my Text, *the Lord shall come to his Temple*, and to whom the Worship and Service of it were appropriated in a particular Manner, as the Eternal and only begotten Son of God.

But further, That Christ was that same Divine Person, that *μυστικός Ἄγγελος*, as St. Clement Alex. calls him, who conducted Israel out of Egypt into Canaan, will appear from hence: Numb. 21. 5, 6. 'tis said, *That the People murmured and spake against God, [or the Word of God, as the Chaldee Paraphrast] and against Moses; saying, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the Wilderness? For there is no Bread, and our Soul loatheth this light Bread. And the Lord [the Word of the Lord, Chaldee Paraphrase] sent*  
O 2 fiery



fiery Serpents among the People, and they bit the People, and much People of Israel dyed. Now who that Divine Person was, whom the Israelites are here said to have tempted, or spoken against, we learn from those Words of St. Paul, 1 Cor. 10. 9. *Neither tempt ye Christ,* *καὶ οὐκ ἐπειράσατε αὐτὸν ἐπειράσαντες,* as even some of them, or, as some of them also tempted, and were destroy'd of Serpents. That Cavil of the Socinians, that it is not said, *As some of them also tempted Christ,* is trifling and groundless: Since the common Usage and Propriety of Speech require that it shou'd be so understood: Such elleiptical Expressions being very frequent both in sacred and prophane Writings, and naturally supplied by understanding the Person, or Thing spoken of immediately before, which, for Brevity's Sake, is not repeated. A Parallel-Instance of which Manner of Speaking we have Deut. 6. 16. *Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God* ἐν τριτον ἰξεπειράσατε ἐν τῷ πειρασμῷ, [as the 70 render it] as ye tempted in your Temptation. Where you see, the Lord your God is not repeated again, but implied or understood in the latter Part of the Words.

For the further Confirmation of the Truth of this Doctrine, I come in the next Place,

*Fifthly,* To consider the most material Objections that I find made against it. And,

*First,* As to the Opinion of those who will not allow that extraordinary Angel, that I have

have so often had Occasion to speak of in the Prosecution of this Argument; to have been the Eternal Word, or Son of God, or any more than a mere created Angel, dignified with those Titles of *Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Redeemer from all Evil, &c.* and receiving those Honours that were paid him, not in his own Right, but as due only to the Character he bore of God's Messenger or Ambassador to his Church and People: To this I have two Things to offer: 1<sup>st</sup>, That the contrary Doctrine which I have been endeavouring to establish, is own'd to have been the common Opinion of the First Fathers of the Church; whose Authority will certainly preponderate with every sober Christian, against any Opinion produc'd in Opposition to it, that has but equal Reasons and Arguments to support it. And 2<sup>dly</sup>, As to their Manner of explaining those Appearances, and the concomitant Circumstances and Consequences of them, I answer, That, tho' there is a Respect and Honour due to Ambassadors, in Proportion to the Dignity and Eminency of the Princes whom they represent; yet it was never known that ever an Ambassador either assum'd the proper Name and Titles of his Prince directly to himself, or had them ascrib'd to him by others, or pretended to act of himself, and without exhibiting any Credentials, to signify the Authority



and Powers delegated or committed to him. And 'tis to be observ'd, that whenever God sent his Prophets with any Message to his People, they always shew'd them by what Authority they came, and whose Messengers they were; prefacing their Embassy with a—*Thus saith the Lord, Hear ye the Word of the Lord, &c.* But this extraordinary Angel, you have heard, acts and speaks as God, has the incommunicable Name and Attributes of God directly ascrib'd to him, and Divine Worship and Adoration paid him: Which, if he were a Creature, cou'd not be done without Idolatry, and robbing God of that Honour which is peculiarly due to him; a Sin which the old World, and the *Jews* themselves in particular, were too prone to, for God to give them such a fair Occasion as this wou'd have been, to lead them into it.

*Secondly,* It is objected against this Doctrine of God the Son's Appearing and manifesting himself in the fore-mention'd Instances; and particularly as to his delivering the Law on Mount Sinai, as if it were not consistent nor reconcileable with the Account which the Scripture gives of this Matter. For the Apostle calls the Law, *Heb. 2. 2. the Word spoken by Angels*; and *St. Stephen* says, *Acts 7. That they receiv'd the Law by the Disposition of Angels.* And if so, it cannot, with any Consistency with these

these Scriptures, be said to have been deliver'd by God, God the Son, or God-Redeemer.

But to this it may be answer'd, that 'tis said expressly, that God came down upon Mount Sinai on this Occasion, and spake with the Children of Israel there. *Ex. 19. 9. Lo! I come unto thee in a thick Cloud, saith the Lord unto Moses, that the People may hear when I speak unto thee, and believe thee for ever.* So that no Doubt can be made but that the Divine Majesty was there present, signified by those terrible Symbols of his Presence, the Thunder, and Lightning, and Earthquake, and Sound of Trumpets which they heard and saw. And you may please to remember, that it has already been made appear, that at the Delivery of the Law, God made himself known by the Title of God, who brought Israel out of Egypt, and that he who did this was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is promiscuously stiled *Jehovah*, and the *Angel of Jehovah*. So that it is manifest all these several Actions, Characters and Designations must appertain to one and the same Divine Person, and that God who gave the Law, was the same with that Divine Angel who appear'd unto Abraham: And I have also shewn, that this same Divine Person was God the Son, or God-Redeemer. The only Difficulty there-



fore remaining is, how this Divine Person God the Son can be said to have deliver'd the Law, when it is called *the Word spoken by Angels*, and said to be *receiv'd by the Disposition of Angels*. But these seeming Differences are easily reconciled. For we may well suppose that he made Use of the Ministry of Angels on this Occasion: And indeed the Scriptures plainly testify that he did, *Psalms 68. 17. The Chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of Angels, and the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy Place.* He was the principal Agent, who presided over, ruled and directed the whole Action, tho' the Voice came not immediately from him to Moses and the People, but was form'd in the Air by those Ministering Spirits which attended upon him; As the trembling of the Mount, the Thundering, the Sound of the Trumpets, and the rest of these miraculous Indications of his Presence were. So that this Divine Person may well be said to have deliver'd the Law, tho' as to the external Promulgation of it, it might be convey'd to the Ears of the People, not directly and immediately from himself, but by the Mediation, Disposition, or Ministry of his Angels; That Way of revealing his Will immediately to the Children of Men being reserv'd 'till his Coming in the Flesh.

*Thirdly,* It may be enquir'd, if this extraordinary Angel who appear'd so frequent-

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ly to the Patriarchs, and unto *Moses*, and thus deliver'd the Law on Mount *Sinai*, was the Eternal Son or Word of God, as we assert; How this can consist with that Position of the Apostle, *Heb. 1. 1, 2.* where, comparing the Dispensation of the Law with that of the Gospel, he shews how much the latter ought to be preferr'd above the former upon this Account; inasmuch as *God in times past spake unto the Fathers by the Prophets, but in these last Days, under the Gospel-Oeconomy, he hath spoken unto us by his Son?* To say that God the Son, or God in, or by his Son, hath in Times past reveal'd his Will to Man in the Instances before-mentioned, may seem to thwart the Apostle's Assertion, and to destroy the *Antithesis*, or Opposition which he makes between the Law and the Gospel, upon which he grounds the Pre-eminence of this latter above the former Dispensation, But to this it is answer'd, that the *Antithesis*, which the Apostle puts between the Two Dispensations, is to be understood with Respect to the different Manner of the Son of God's Appearing and manifesting himself under them. In former Times he made the Will of God known to Men, either by Prophets speaking, as *St. Peter* says, *1 Pet. 1. 11. By the Spirit of Christ that was in them,* or in the Form and Fashion of an Angel, when the Body he assum'd, was not Hypostatically united to his God-Head;



Head: So that when he thus reveal'd himself to them, it was not immediately, any more than when he spake in and by the Prophets. But when the *Word was made Flesh*, and dwelt among Men, he reveal'd the Will of God immediately to them, *immediatione suppositi*, as the School-Men speak. The humane Nature in which he then appear'd was Hypostatically united to his Divine Nature; and as the reasonable Soul and Flesh is one Man, so God and Man became one Christ, one Person: So that what God thus incarnate spoke to them, was spoken immediately by God; God was the immediate Object of their Senses; *they heard, they saw with their Eyes, and their Hands handled of the Word of Life, that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto them.* As St. John testifies of himself, and the rest of the Disciples who convers'd with the Son of God, during his Abode in the World. He was as immediately present with them, as the Prophets, who spake by the Spirit, were with their Fathers. *λογος γάρ ην κι εστιν*, &c. says Justin Martyr in his Second Apology, "It was, and is the same Divine Word, who in Times past spoke of Things to come by the Prophets, and who having taken our Nature upon him, and become *συνουσιαστης*, of like Passions with ourselves, hath now by himself reveal'd the heavenly Doctrine to us". And this sufficiently denotes

denotes the Preference and Pre-eminence of the Gospel-Dispensation above the Law, God having never manifested himself to the World in such an illustrious Manner and so immediately, as in his only begotten Son made Man,

*Fourthly*, It may be Objected : If that Angel was God the Son, or God-Redeemer, how is this to be reconciled with God the Father's commanding all the *Angels of God to worship him* : And why might he not according to this *Hypothesis*, say to an Angel, *thou art my Son*; which the Apostle tells us, *he never said to any of the Angels at any Time?* Heb. 1. 5, 13. which he might have done without any Incongruity, if that Angel was God the Son. *Ans<sup>w</sup>.* The Angels there spoken of were created Angels, Angels by Nature; so that that Compellation, in that peculiar Sense in which it is ascrib'd to Christ, was not applicable to any of them. For the Son of God did not take upon him the Nature of Angels, was no Angel by Nature, but only by Office, in Respect of his Commission and Delegation from the Father, and forasmuch as in the Execution thereof he appear'd in the Form or Likeness of an Angel, assuming such a visible Form as the real and natural Angels used to appear in. And as the Angels were his Creatures, and made by him, *as every thing was that was made*: John 1. 3. It was their Duty to



to worship and adore him as the Author of their Being.

These are the chief Objections, to which the Doctrine I have been endeavouring to establish and explain to you, seems liable; and of how little Force they are when duly consider'd you have now seen.

I proceed in the Sixth and Last Place, to consider what useful Inferences may be drawn from what has been said in Relation both to Faith and Practice. And,

*First*, If all Intercourse between God and Man is, and always has been carried on by the Mediation of Christ the Son of God, ever since the Fall of Man, and the establishing of the Covenant of Grace upon it, included in that Promise made to our first Parents, that *the Seed of the Woman shou'd bruise the Serpent's Head*, and the Renewal of which Promise afterwards to *Abraham*, is said to have been the *renewing of the Covenant*, and the *Preaching of the Gospel unto Abraham*; from hence we may learn to set an higher Esteem and Value upon the Privileges and Advantages that we are intitled to in Right of our Christian Faith and Profession. By Baptism we were made Members of that Mystical Body whereof Christ the Son of God is the Head, initiated into a Solemn Covenant with God, and entituled to all the Blessings and Promises annex'd to, and secur'd to us, upon the Terms of that Covenant. We  
thereby

thereby acquir'd a federal Right to all the Benefits of Christ's Mediation and Intercession with the Father; the Merits of his Death and Passion, the Promises of the powerful Succours and Assistances of the Holy Spirit to enable us to do our Duty, the Pardon of our Sins upon sincere and true Repentance, and a Crown of never-fading Glory in his Father's Kingdom. We have no Promise of Peace, and Reconciliation, and Acceptance with the Father, but in and through the Mediation of his Eternal and only begotten Son: We can have no Access to God but by Christ, to whom he *hath given all things, and put all things under his Feet, that he might be the Head of all unto his Church*: We must be adopted in Christ, before we can be accounted the Children of God, or call him our Father: 'Till then, 'till this new Relation is establish'd in Christ, *we are Aliens from the Common-wealth of Israel, and Strangers from the Covenants of Promise, without Hope, and without God in the World*, Eph. 2. 12. How happy then, my Brethren, are we (and how happy shall we be, if we are careful to make a right Use of and improve those Advantages) that God has call'd us to the Light of the Gospel, and entitled us to the Benefits of the Mediation and Intercession of his Well-beloved Son; that we are of the Number of those whom the Son of God has been pleas'd to take into his more immediate



mediate Care and Protection, to conduct us, as he did the *Israelites* of old, through this barren and howling Wilderness, into the Pleasures and Delights of the Celestial *Canaan*, to make us the Subjects of his Kingdom of Grace here, in Order to reign with him for ever in the Kingdom of his Glory hereafter. And how wretched and deplorable is the Condition of all those who are out of this Mystical *Goshen*, excluded from the marvellous Light of the Gospel which shines so comfortably among us; who either reject or shut their Eyes against it; either will not come to the Knowledge of Christ, or Apostatize from it. Since in the rejecting Christ and the Benefits of his Mediation for us, they reject all Communion of Fellowship and friendly Intercourse with God; to whom by the Oeconomy establish'd, as you have heard, upon the first Entrance of Sin into the World, no Access can be made but thro' the Mediation of his Well-beloved and only begotten Son! 'Tis in and through Christ only, that we can hope for Salvation; and we must, like *Jacob*, present ourselves before him in the perfum'd Garments of our elder Brother, in the Righteousness of Christ, and the Merits of his Death, and the Satisfaction and Atonement that he hath made upon the Cross for us, if we expect a Blessing from our heavenly Father.

Secondly,

*Secondly*, If Christ the Son of God had the Sovereignty and Administration of God's Government over Man, new-model'd upon the Foot of the Covenant of Grace, establish'd by his Mediation immediately upon the Fall, committed unto him by the Father, and has actually exercis'd the same, both before, and under, and since the Law : If he is the same Divine Person who appear'd to, and convers'd with the Patriarchs and Moses, and brought *Israel* out of *Egypt*, gave them the Law on Mount *Sinai* in the Wilderness, and afterwards had his Habitation among them, and was worshipp'd by them in the Tabernacle and Temple ; the same whom they tempted in the Wilderness, and whose Glory *Isaiah* saw in a Vision in the Temple ; if our blessed Saviour, I say, was that same Divine Person ; this is a plain and demonstrative Proof of the Truth of our holy Faith. *1st*, That he had a Being before his Incarnation or Manifestation in the Flesh : And *2dly*, That the Being which he had antecedently to his taking our Nature upon him was not a created but a Divine Being, communicated to him by the Father from all Eternity.

And, *1st*, From hence we see plainly, that Jesus Christ had a real Being or Existence before his Manifestation in the Flesh. The New Testament affords many evident and undeniable Proofs of the Truth of this fundamental Article of our Christian Faith.

For



For we are there plainly told, that he was in Heaven before his Incarnation, and came down from thence when he manifested himself to the World, *John 6. 51. I am the living Bread, says he himself, which came down from Heaven: And Ver. 38. I came down from Heaven not to do my own Will, but the Will of him that sent me. And 16. 27, 28. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the World: Again, I leave the World, and go unto the Father. Again, 6. 62. He says to his Disciples, What if you shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?* plainly intimating, that he was, and had a Being in Heaven before the Time when he spoke those Words, and before his Ascension into Heaven. Thus St. Paul understood it, *Eph. 4. 9. For that he ascended, what is it, but that he also descended first?* plainly asserting, that he descended from Heaven before he ascended thither; in Opposition to that Heretical Notion, of his preparatory Ascension into Heaven before his entring upon his Prophetic Office, when he is suppos'd to have receiv'd Commission and Authority of God to preach the Gospel, and so only to have descended from Heaven: A Notion which has neither the Testimony of Scripture or Tradition to support it, and has been taken up merely to elude the Force of these unanswerable Arguments, that are brought to evince Christ's having had a

Being

Being before his Conception here on Earth. For as the Scriptures make Mention only of one Ascension into Heaven, namely, after his Resurrection; so St. Paul you see, is positive that his Descent was antecedent to his Ascension. He descended first before he ascended; and consequently was, and had a Being in Heaven before he became Man and dwelt on the Earth. Hence it was that his Disciples believ'd that *he came forth from God*, John 16. 30. and that the Apostle stiles him, 1 Cor. 15. 47. *the Lord from Heaven*. Besides, tho' as to his humane Nature, he was six Months younger than John the Baptist, because Elizabeth the Baptist's Mother, had conceiv'd him six Months before the blessed Virgin was first saluted by the Angel; and tho' he did not appear in the World 'till many Hundred Years after the Death of Abraham; yet the Scriptures positively assert that he was before either of them. As to John, he gives this Testimony of Christ, John 1. 15. *This is he of whom I spoke, he that cometh after me, is preferr'd before me; for he was before me*: He came after John, in Respect of his Birth, as Man; and was before him, yea before the Worlds from all Eternity, as the only begotten Son of God. And as to Abraham, Jesus told the Jews, that tho' the Patriarch lived above Eighteen Hundred Years before he came into the World, yet nevertheless he was before him, John 8. 58.



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*Verily, Verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am.* Now what has been said concerning Christ's exercising his Mediatorial and Kingly Power, in presiding over and governing his Church in the Instances you have heard, serves to confirm and illustrate these plain and positive Assertions of the New Testament, that the Lord Jesus did not first begin to be, when he became Man, and dwelt among us, but was the same Divine Person, who upon the first Establishment of the Covenant of Grace, upon the Entrance of Sin into the World, had the Government of Mankind committed unto him, and has actually administred the same ever since: *He was the same Yesterday, to-day, and for ever.*

*Secondly,* From hence also we learn, that as Christ was, or had a Being before his Conception by the blessed Virgin, so that he was not a created Being, but the Divine Essence by which he was as truly and properly God, as he was Man in Respect of what he deriv'd from his Mother. For seeing he is the same Divine Person who appear'd (as you have heard) to the Patriarchs, to Moses, and other Holy Men of old, under the Designation or Character of the Angel of the Lord or Jehovah, and of the God of Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob, the Judge of the whole Earth, &c. had the incommunicable

Name

## and the Mediatorial Kingdom of Christ. 211

Name and Attributes of God ascrib'd to him, and Divine Worship, Adoration, Vows, Sacrifices and Prayers made to him, he cou'd be no Creature, but truly and essentially God: According to what is expressly declar'd of him in the New Testament, *John 1. 1.* That he was in the Beginning with God, and was God; that being or subsisting, in the Form of God he thought it not Robbery to be equal with God: But emptied himself, and took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeness of Men: *Phil. 2. 6, 7.* That he was God manifested in the Flesh, *1 Tim. 3. 16.* and the true God, and Eternal Life: *1 John 5. 20.* And Lastly, That the Church which he came to plant and establish in the World, is the Church of God, which he has purchas'd with his own Blood. *Acts 20. 28.* Which can only be understood of Christ the Son of God, the great Mediator between God and Man; in whom we have Redemption through his Blood, even the Forgiveness of our Sins; being sanctified through the Offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all: He who hath purchas'd us with his own Blood, is here expressly declar'd to be God, the God, whose Portion and Inheritance the Church is. But to proceed,

Thirdly, From God's great and wonderful Love to Mankind, in receding from



the Rigour of the first Covenant of Works, according to which, nothing but absolutely perfect and unfinning Obedience cou'd have entitled any one to Life and Salvation, and his establishing a new Covenant of Grace and Mercy with fallen Man, in the Promise of a Saviour, as you have heard it at large explain'd: From hence, I say, every good Christian will receive comfortable Impressions of the tender Mercy and Compassion of his Heavenly Father towards him, and of the infinite Pity and Condescension of his blessed Redeemer, in undertaking to humble himself to the Meanness of our Nature, to become Man, to live a poor, despis'd and necessitous Life, and at last to undergo a bitter and ignominious Death for him, in Order to procure those easier and more favourable Terms and Conditions of obtaining the Favour of God and Everlasting Life, held forth to us in that Covenant. Oh! That such poor, useless, insignificant Worms as we are, shou'd be the Objects of the Regard and Consideration, the Care and Concern of an infinitely wise, and just, and holy God! That when, by our wilful Rebellion, we had forfeited all Pretensions to his Favour, and consign'd ourselves over to endless Misery, he shou'd vouchsafe to contrive a Way to recover us from that lost, forlorn, and undone Condition; to mitigate the Sentence

tence to which we had render'd ourselves obnoxious; and put us once more into a Capacity of being happy! That the Eternal Son of God shou'd interpose his Mediation for such miserable wretched Creatures, and stipulate with the Father for their Restitution; offering himself to become their Surety for the Discharge of that Debt, which they stood bound to pay to the Divine Justice; and in Order thereunto to put himself in their Stead, to become Man, and make an Atonement and Satisfaction for their Sins, by the Sacrifice of himself upon the Cross! These are such stupendous Instances of the infinite Goodness and Benignity of the Divine Nature, as may serve to raise the drooping and languishing Spirits of a Christian, while his penitent Soul is labouring under the Sense of his Guilt, and the Weight and Burthen of his Sins. He will find no Occasion to despair of Mercy, or to let distracting Fears possess his Soul, when he considers how gracious and merciful a God he has to address himself to; who has already without our asking done so much for us; all that infinite Wisdom cou'd contrive, all that infinite Goodness cou'd prompt him to, in Order to make us happy: How ready his Heavenly Father is to receive his prodigal Children when they return to him; and what a powerful



Advocate and Intercessor he has in Heaven to plead for him, and apply the Merits of his Death to all those that by a lively Faith and sincere Repentance will seek for Mercy; who will yet turn from the Evil of their Ways, and take up firm and effectual Resolutions to be more punctual in discharging the Obligations that their holy Profession lays upon them for the Time to come. God hath done all for us that we can desire, to bring us to Heaven, and hath only left in our Power to frustrate his gracious Designs toward us, and to be miserable, in Case we are resolutely bent upon our Ruin and Destruction, and will not pursue that Way which shou'd lead us to Happiness.

*Fourthly,* Since our Lord Jesus Christ was the same Divine Person, to whom the Administration of God's Government over Man was committed, and who has actually exercised the same ever since the World began, as well before as since he assum'd our Nature, and was made Man; let the Consideration of the Dignity and Eminency of his Person create in us a more awful Regard for the Authority of his Laws, a greater Zeal for his Service, and a greater Concern for his Honour and Glory; make us more solicitous to please him, more afraid to offend him, more studious to promote the Interest of his Kingdom, and more careful to form and fashion our Lives after his Example. For the

the greater and more eminent the Person is, the greater Regard we must own, is due to whatever he enjoyns, or recommends to us; and to neglect his Injunctions, to act contrary to his Commands, and lead a Course of Life just the Reverse of what he has prescrib'd in the Gospel, and left us a Pattern of in his own Example, argues a Contempt of his Authority, and carries with it the highest Affront that we are capable of putting upon him; and which we cannot think but his Justice will engage him to punish us for, according to our Demerits. If Love and Gratitude then to our heavenly Benefactor, those more noble and generous Principles, will not prevail upon us to conform ourselves to his holy Will and Commandments; let the Terrors of the Lord, and a Judgment to come, work us into better and wiser Resolutions, engage us to be solicitous to please him, and make him our Friend; that we may stand before him with Comfort in that last and dreadful Day, and escape that terrible Sentence which he will then pass upon all impenitent and ungodly Sinners: *Go ye cursed into everlasting Fire, prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels.* Consider, my Brethren, every Sin we commit, every wilful Act of Disobedience to any of his Commandments, every vicious Lust or Passion that we indulge in our Hearts, disposes us for Hell and Misery, fits and prepares us for that terrible



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Sentence which shall pass and be executed on the Ungodly in that Day. May we all then resolve to break off our Sins by Repentance, and return unto the Lord now, while we may, while the Gate of Mercy stands open to us, and God is ready to receive us; now when he invites us to his Table, to renew our Covenant with him, to bewail our past Offences, and receive fresh Supplies of Grace to enable us to be more fruitful in good Works, more abounding in all Vertues and Holiness for the Time to come. So shall our dear Redeemer be reconciled to us, and speak Peace and Comfort to our Souls; and after we have spent the few Days that remain in a more conscientious Observance of his holy Laws, he will at last transplant us into his Heavenly Kingdom; there to live and reign with him in Glory for evermore.



S E R

## SERMON VIII.

A Good Life is the best  
Preservative against all  
fatal Errors in Religion.



JOHN vii. 17.

*If any Man will do his Will, he shall  
know of the Doctrine, whether it  
be of God, or whether I speak of  
myself.*

**T**HE Occasion of our Blessed Sa-  
viour's speaking these Words was  
this: In the Beginning of the  
Chapter, you find, that having  
stir'd up the Jealousie of the Great Con-  
sistory, or Sanhedrim at Jerusalem, by the  
Execution of his Prophetical Office there, he  
was retir'd into Galilee for that Purpose, to  
teach and preach the Gospel in the Cities  
and Villages of that Country; and then the  
Text tells us, Ver. 2. That the Jews Feast  
of



of Tabernacles was at hand. Lev. 23. 34. This Feast God appointed to be observ'd for eight Days together every Year in the seventh Month; the seven first Days whereof they were not to dwell in Houses, but in Booths or Tents cover'd with the Bows or Branches of Trees, and on the eighth to hold an Holy Convocation unto the Lord: And tho' the primary Design of God's instituting this Feast, was to put the *Jews* in Mind of the uneasy Circumstances that their Fathers were in while they dwelt in Tabernacles in the Wilderness, *Ver.* 43. that they might from thence take Occasion to bless God for all his Mercies, the Ease, the Plenty, and all the Conveniences of Life that they enjoy'd in the Promis'd Land, where he had settled them: Yet the principal, tho' the remoter, End or Intent of this Institution seems to have been the typifying or prefiguring the great Mystery of Godliness, the *Word's* being made *Flesh*, and dwelling or tabernacling among us: That as the Feast of the *Passover* was a Type of our Saviour's Passion, and *Pentecost*, of the Mission of the Holy Ghost; so this of *Tabernacles*, shou'd be of his Incarnation: And to strengthen this Opinion, you find, that all Chronologers are agreed that he was born in the Time of this Feast, about the latter End of the seventh Month, or *September*. When this Feast came, our Lord, for this Reason perhaps, thinking it a fit

fit Time to make a further Manifestation of himself unto the Jews, return'd to Jerusalem: and about the Midst of the Feast went up into the Temple and taught, Ver. 14. and seeing it was not customary among them that any shou'd teach the Law, but such as had been educated for that Purpose, 'till the 30th Year of their Age, at least, in the School of some of the Doctors or Professors of the Law, the Jews marvelled, saying, *How knoweth this Man Letters, having never learn'd?* 1. e. having not been brought up in the usual Ways and Methods of attaining to this Sort of Knowledge. Now, seeing they were strictly enjoyn'd by the Law, to hearken unto the Prophets that God shou'd send to speak to them in his Name, Deut. 18. 19. *Whosoever will not hearken unto my Words, which the Prophet that I shall raise up from among their Brethren, and send unto them shall speak in my Name, I will require it of him,* saith God: Therefore he tells them that he was a Prophet so qualify'd, that the Doctrine he taught them was from God, and consequently, that they ought to hearken and be obedient to it. But because they, at least, the Great Consistory had Power to examine and judge of the Truth or Falshood of the Pretensions, that any one made of his being a Prophet sent from God, Deut. 18. 21, 22. He therefore submits his Doctrine to their Examination, and tells them here  
in



in the Words of my Text, what Qualifications, what previous Dispositions are requisite to enable them to pass a right Judgment upon it, and to direct them in all their Searches and Enquiries after Truths of this Nature: *If any Man will do his Will*, i. e. “ is resolv’d and determin’d with himself to “ live in entire Obedience to the Will of “ God, so far as it shall be made manifest “ to him, how opposite soever it may prove “ to the Affections and Inclinations of his “ own corrupt Nature; that is not wedded “ to his own Ways, but ready to serve God “ in the Way, that according to the best of “ his Judgment he thinks he has prescrib’d “ him, that Man, and none but he, is like “ to pass a right Judgment upon my Doctrine. *He shall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God.*

It is too common, to escape the Observation of any considering Christian, how Scepticism, Infidelity, and a Contempt of God and Religion prevail every where among us; that there are a Party of Men in the World, who wou’d be thought in several Respects very considerable, with whom it is esteem’d a very commendable Attainment, a peculiar and distinguishing Accomplishment to raise Scruples and make Objections against the Faith into which they have been baptized, to argue themselves and others out of their Christianity into a Disbelief of the fundamental

mental Truths of Religion, even to the rejecting the Gospel of Christ, and denying the Lord that bought them. This is the prevailing Distemper of this unhappy Age we live in: And I hope, it will not be an unprofitable Undertaking, if, according to my poor Abilities, I endeavour to discover to you both the Rise of this Epidemical Disease, and the proper Preservative against the Malignity and Infection of it: And this, I think, may be done by making out these two Points of Doctrine imply'd in the Words of my Text, *viz.*

*First,* That Vice and Immorality render Men unfit for the Examination of the Truths of Religion.

*Secondly,* That a good Life, directed and influenc'd with a deep Sense of God, an entire Submission to his holy Will, and a sincere Love of Vertue and Goodness, disposes all those that are possess'd of it to pass a right Judgment in Matters of Religion, and will effectually preserve them from falling into such Errors therein, as wou'd be fatal to, and destructive of their Salvation. *If any Man will do his Will, &c.* I apply myself to the Proof of the first of these.

*First,* That Vice and Immorality render Men unfit for the Examination of the Truths of Religion.

If we consider the mutual Dependance and Influence that those two principal Faculties of



of the Soul, the Will and the Understanding have upon each other, we cannot imagine but where the former has been long deprav'd and perverted, impos'd upon by the false Appearances of Things, and subjected to the sinful Pleasures and Vanities of the World, it will very much prejudice and put a false Byass upon the other Faculty, when it shou'd pass Judgment upon those Doctrines that prescribe the abandoning and forsaking of them. When Vice has gotten Possession of the Heart, and has been settled in its Usurpation by a long habitual Practice of sinning, the Will and Affections that have been so long enslav'd to it, will oppose any Thing that wou'd dispossess the Tyrant, set the Fancy and Imagination on Work to solicit its Cause, and prejudice the Judgment in Favour of it, and to misrepresent and set in a false Light all those contrary Principles and Rules of Living that are laid before it. This, we find, was the Case of the Jews in our Saviour's Time, as he tells us; *John 3. 9, 10. And this was their Condemnation, that when Light was come into the World, they lov'd Darknes rather than Light, because their Deeds were evil. For every one that doth Evil hateth the Light, lest his Deeds shou'd be reprov'd.* They wou'd not hearken or assent to that Doctrine, which they perceiv'd tended to draw them off from their evil Courses, and to overthrow those false Maxims and

Principles that they had so long govern'd themselves by; and therefore, as a Punishment of this their Obstinacy, they were given up to the Delusion of their own hardened and impenitent Hearts; *That seeing, they might see, and not perceive; and hearing, they might hear, and not understand, lest at any Time they should be converted, and their Sins shou'd be forgiven them,* Mar. 4. 12.

What a Suffusion therefore is to the Eye of the Body, hindering it from taking in the true Species of any Object, that Vice and Immorality are to the Understanding, which is the Eye of the Soul: They put false Colours upon, and misrepresent Things to it, hinder it from passing a right Judgment upon whatever relates to the Reformation and Amendment of Life, and consequently, dispose the Sinner for downright Atheism and Infidelity.

For, suppose him given up to Lewdness, Lasciviousness, Luxury or Intemperance, so entirely, that he is resolved that no Consideration whatsoever shall make him quit and forsake that vicious Course of Life he has fallen upon, this will give him a strong Prejudice against the Gospel, that so expressly condemns all such impure and ungodly Practices, and make him cast about himself what Method he must take to make himself easy in his Wickedness, to prevent the Trouble that wou'd arise from the Conviction



tion of his Conscience, and the Sense of the Danger he is in. Now, if by the Assistance of Satan or his Emissaries, who are numerous, and ready enough, God knows, to promote his Interest in the World, he can once reason himself into a Disbelief of the Divine Authority of the Gospel, he has gain'd his Point, he will then have nothing to disturb him from that Quarter, he will be free'd from the frightful Apprehensions, that he wou'd otherwise have had of the Effects and Consequences of his Sins: And very slight Arguments will pass with him when he is so prepar'd, and thinks it so much his Interest to comply with them. To weaken his Faith in this Particular, and to introduce this Infidelity into his Heart, he will be advis'd to make his Attacks against such particular Doctrines, as his Directors may suppose most liable to Exception, as for Example, the Mysteries of the Christian Faith; and here he will be taught, that God cannot require or oblige him to believe what his Reason cannot fathom and comprehend; and this will give a great Shock to the Credibility of the Gospel, which teaches us to believe, as the Foundation of our Religion, those Mysteries of Godliness, those Revelations which God has made of himself to Mankind, which surpass the Comprehension of all finite Understandings: And if his Reason must be the Measure

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sure of his Faith, he will think it an easy Transition, to make his Appetites the Measure of his Duty, and so reject all those moral Precepts that contradict them. Thus Vice and Impurity fomented and cherish'd in the Heart of a Sinner, naturally dispose him for, and draw him on by Degrees into Infidelity, and that, perhaps so insensibly, that tho' he adhere to the Conclusion, yet he shall hardly perceive the Principles from whence he drew it, which were his own irregular and disorderly Lusts and Passions, that gave a wrong Byass to, and debauch'd his Judgment.

'Tis true indeed, wicked and ungodly Men may have as quick Apprehensions, and as good natural Capacities of judging of, and distinguishing between Truth and Falshood, as those that have *sanctified the Lord God in their Hearts*; but then the Lusts and Passions that bear Rule in their Hearts will prejudice them against the Admission and Acknowledgment of the Truth, as the Pride and Self-Conceit of the Pharisees hinder'd them from discovering the evident Testimonies and Characters that *Moses* and the Prophets had given of our Saviour, which Prejudices and Prepossessions we suppose good Men freed from, who with a pure Heart seek to know the Will of God in Order to obey and conform themselves to it.

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Secondly,



*Secondly*, They have not the Assurance, of the same Helps and Assistances, which God has promis'd to give to faithful Christians (as will appear hereafter) but as a Punishment of the Abuse of their natural Powers and Abilities, and their despising of that Measure of his common and preventing Grace which God has afforded them, they are threatn'd to have their Minds darken'd and infatuated, and to be given up to such strong Delusions, that they shall not discover the plainest Truths in Religion, nor discern the most fatal and pernicious Errors. *For this Cause* (says St. Paul, *2 Thess. 2. 11, 12. i. e.* because they receiv'd not the Love of the Truth that they might be saved) *God shall send them strong Delusions, that they shou'd believe a Lye, that all might be damn'd who believe not the Truth, but had Pleasure in Unrighteousness.* So that whatever their natural Endowments and Accomplishments may be, they lye under great Disadvantages, in Respect of good Men, on both these Accounts.

But, *Thirdly*, and *Lastly*, Whatever Discoveries a wicked Man may make, whatever fine Notions he may attain to in Matters of Religion, yet he falls far short of Divine Knowledge, which is a burning, as well as a shining Light; it consists not in such airy Speculations as swim only in the

the Brain, but it descends into the Heart and produces there an active Principle of an holy Life, and never commences true Christian Knowledge, 'till it has this Effect, 'till it becomes practical. For as we cannot be said to see any Object, but when we have the Image and Picture of it drawn in our Eye; so neither can we properly be said to know Religion, but when we have the Likeness and Resemblance of it wrought through Grace in our sanctify'd and regenerate Souls; and become conformable to the Rules and Precepts it prescribes. And this may suffice to have been said in Proof of this first Proposition; That Vice and Immorality render Men unfit for the Examination of the Truths of Religion. I proceed now in the next Place to shew,

*Secondly*, That a good Life directed and influenc'd with a deep Sense of God, an entire Submission to his holy Will, and a sincere Love of Vertue and Goodness, disposes all those that are possess'd of it to pass a right Judgment in Matters of Religion, and will effectually preserve them from falling into such Errors therein, as wou'd be fatal to, and destructive of their Salvation.

It was a Custom generally receiv'd in the Schools of the Ancient Philosophers to



spend some Time in trying and examining the *Genius* and Disposition of their Scholars before they admitted them to their ἀχρόματα, the more abstruse and sublimer Parts of their Philosophy; and the *Platonists* particularly, laid down several Rules for the Purgation of the Soul, for the refining and purifying it from the Contagion of the Body, the Infection it might have contracted from the sensitive Life, in Order to fit and prepare it for the Contemplation of intellectual and abstracted Truths, and in like Manner our Lord and Master here instructs his Disciples and Followers, what Frame and Temper of Mind to bring along with them, when they apply themselves to the Study of his most excellent Philosophy. They must live in Conformity to the Will of God so far as it is made known to them, walk according to their present Light, and be ready and willing to improve in their Obedience in Proportion to the Knowledge they shall have of what he requires of them, and they that come thus qualified will have the Advantage of all others in a twofold Respect.

*First*, Inasmuch as this Divine Frame and Temper of Mind does necessarily and of itself dispose them for the Attainment of the Knowledge of Divine Truths.

*Second-*

*Secondly*, In Respect of the particular Guidance and Direction which they will have from God to lead them into the Knowledge of all such Truths as are necessary to be known by them, in Order to their Salvation. For,

*First*, This Divine Frame and Temper of Mind, will naturally and of itself dispose all those that are so qualify'd for the Attainment of the Knowledge of Divine Truths, inasmuch as it will incline them to search after it.

*First*, With greater Application.

*Secondly*, With greater Sincerity and Truth.

*Thirdly*, With greater Love and Affection, and,

*Fourthly*, With greater Awe and Reverence than others.

*First*, It will incline them to search after divine Knowledge with greater Application than others. Men's Endeavours after any Thing are proportionable to the Opinion they have of the Necessity of attaining to it, and the Benefits and Advantages that will accompany it: And seeing the good Man is fully satisfy'd, that to know the Will of God in Order to practise what he requires of him, is that whereon the Success of his main Design does depend, which



is to secure to himself the Love and Favour of God here, and a blessed Eternity hereafter, we cannot imagine, but that he shou'd use his greatest Diligence and Affiduity in his Enquiries after it, in searching the Scriptures, in proving all Things in Order to hold fast that which is good, in consulting his Spiritual Guides, and using all such other Means, as his Prudence and Discretion shall think any Way conducive to this End, to the finding out the sacred Truth which will make him wise unto Salvation. While on the contrary, he whose Mind is estrang'd from God and his Duty, led away with the sinful Pleasures and Vanities of this World, will either wholly neglect this Search after true Wisdom, or, at least, make it only the *πάρεργον*, or By-Work of his Life, and perform it with such Supineness and Indifferency, as it is not likely to meet with Success.

*Secondly*, It will encline him after the Knowledge of divine Truths, with greater Sincerity and Integrity than others. He that in his Enquiries into the Truths of Religion has any By-Ends either of Pride or Ambition, or the Interest of a Party to serve, will carry such Prejudices along with him as will be apt to distort his Judgment, and make him prevaricate in Favour of those Ends and Opinions he has a Mind

to

to advance, like the Rods that *Jacob* laid before the Flocks at the Time of their engendring, *Gen.* 30. will be apt to form and fashion all the Conceptions of his Mind, into a Resemblance of an Agreement and Conformity with them, and that so insensibly, that he himself shall hardly perceive it. But the good Man is free from these Prejudices, and having no sinister Designs to give a wrong Byass to his Judgment, but seeking Truth chiefly for its own Sake, and that he may know the Will of God in Order to obey it, is so much the more likely to attain his End, and make a true Discovery.

*Thirdly,* This religious Frame and Temper of Mind will make him more fit to receive the Evidence of divine Truth, in so much as it will engage him to seek after it with greater Love and Affection. As in any Art or Science we apply ourselves to, our Progress is usually answerable to the Love and Affection we have for it, and those are observ'd to make the quickest Advances in any Study, who prosecute it with the greatest Delight and Satisfaction; so is it in the Search after Divine Knowledge, wicked and ungodly Men fall short of the Knowledge of God, because they are unwilling to come to the Truth, which wou'd contradict those  
Q 4 false



false Principles that they suffer themselves to be govern'd by, *They hate the Light, neither come to the Light, lest their Deeds shou'd be reprov'd,* John 3. 20. But on the contrary, the good Man's Delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in his Law doth he meditate Day and Night, Ps. 1. 2. He cometh to the Light, that his Deeds may be manifest that they are wrought in God. John 3. 21. He desires to have his Actions put to the Test, to see whether they are right or no, that he may reform what he finds amiss. And seeing he loves to know the Will of God, he will set himself to the Search of it with his whole Strength, with the full Bent and Attention of his Mind; and so be more like to succeed than he who wants this Incitement of Love and Affection, who has an Aversion to discover what his Sins will not let him approve of.

*Fourthly,* This holy Frame and Temper of Mind does of itself dispose good Men for the Attainment of Divine Knowledge, inasmuch as it will engage them to search after it with greater Awe and Reverence than others that are not so qualified. They are sensible of the vast, the infinite Distance that is between God and the most perfect of his Creatures; and therefore whatever Discoveries and Manifestations he

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has been pleas'd to make of himself, they with an awful Reverence and profound Humility assent to them, and their being above the Power of their shallow Faculties to comprehend them is no Bar to their believing them so far as they are reveal'd; neither need they to wrest and pervert that Revelation to bring it down to a Level with their Capacities and Comprehensions. For they know assuredly that there are Mysteries in the Nature of God, unfathomable Depths in his Wisdom and Providence, that the most enlightned of those holy Spirits which encircle the Throne of his Glory cannot see through and comprehend (for if they cou'd, the Order of Nature wou'd be subverted, God wou'd be finite, and the Creature infinite) and therefore, while they are here *ἐν σπηλαίῳ θανάτου*, in this dark Cave of Death, as the Philosophers call'd this mortal State, that we cannot frame any adequate Conceptions of some Things that God has reveal'd to us concerning himself, is far from being an Argument to good Men to doubt or disbelieve them. They satisfy themselves with the Assurance God has given them of a fuller Discovery of himself hereafter, when Mortality with its Frailties and Imperfections shall be swallow'd up and consummated in Glory. Thus the Humility  
of



of good Men, and the awful Reverence they have for God and his Word, will preserve them from those Prejudices against the Truth, which Pride and Presumption, and a relying too much upon the Strength of their own Reason, will expose ungodly Men to: Who searching for Knowledge out of a Spirit of Contradiction, or for Curiosity rather than Edification, like the Men of *Bethshemesb*, 1 Sam. 6. 19. who look'd into the Ark of God, will be more likely to meet with their own Destruction, than to find out the Truth.

And thus I have shew'd, that a good Life influenc'd with a hearty Sense of God, an entire Submission to his holy Will, and a sincere Love of Vertue and Goodness, gives a great Advantage to those that are possess'd of it in their Search after Divine Knowledge, inasmuch as it doth naturally and of itself dispose them for the Attainment of it, by inclining them to seek it with greater Application, with greater Sincerity and Integrity, with greater Love and Reverence than those that want that Qualification. I come to consider the Advantage they have of all others.

*Secondly*, In Respect of the particular Guidance and Direction which they will receive from God to lead them into the Knowledge of all such Truths, as are necessary to be known

known by them; in Order to their Salvation.

Besides their natural Powers and Abilities which good Christians have in common with the rest of Mankind, by Virtue of their Creation, or as they are Men, they have also, as they are Christians, the Promise of, and a federal Right to that supernatural Assistance which the Lord Jesus purchas'd for them, and communicates by his Blessed Spirit to all holy Souls.

Without this the Holy Ghost assures us, that we can do nothing effectual to Salvation, *We are not sufficient of ourselves,*

*so much as to think any thing as of ourselves, but all our Sufficiency is of God,* says the illuminated Apostle himself, 2 Cor.

3. 5. And again, *The natural Man* [*ψυχὴ ἀνθρώπου*, i. e. that judgeth of Divine Truths only by natural Reason] is said *not to receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are Foolishness unto him, neither can he know them.* But when the

Light of Grace is superadded to the Light of Nature, they gently mix and unite together in holy Souls, and mutually cooperate in carrying on the great Work of Salvation. Now, that God will give the particular Assistance of his Grace to guide and direct good Men to the Knowledge of his Will, we have sufficient Grounds to

Stillingsfl.  
Orig. Sacr.  
p. 322.



to believe from the several Promises that we meet with in Scripture to that Purpose, *Them that are meek*, says David, Psalm 25. 8. *shall he guide in Judgment, and such as are gentle, them shall he learn his Way*; And Ver. 13. *The Secret of the Lord is among them that fear him, and he will shew them his Covenant*. I am the *Light of the World*, says our Saviour, John 8. 12. *he that followeth me shall not walk in Darknes, but shall have the Light of Life*. And again, Ver. 31, 32. *If ye continue in my Word, i. e. in constant Obedience to it, then are ye my Disciples indeed, and ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free*. And lastly, John 14. 21. he says, *He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be lov'd of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him*. And Ver. 23. *My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our Abode with him*. And ah! how happy must those holy Souls be, where so glorious a Guest will vouchsafe to make his Abode! How brightly will the Sun of Righteousness shine upon them! How will he dispel all Spiritual Darkness from their Minds, illuminate their Understandings, give a vital Warmth to all their Affections, and

as the Pillar of Fire did his People of old, conduct them safely through this barren Wilderness, 'till they come to the Heavenly Canaan! By Vertue of this ineffable Communion with God, and this Spiritual Unction which they have from the Holy One, they will find a wonderful Success in all their Search into holy Things; and whereas the Things of God make no more Impression upon the Minds of wicked Men, than the Descriptions of Colours wou'd do upon the Minds of those that are born blind, they will have a living Sense of them, *They will taste and see how gracious the Lord is*, Psalm 34. 8. as holy David expresses it, *Psal. 119. 103. His Words will be sweet to their Taste, yea, sweeter than Honey unto their Mouth.* And tho' these Promises of supernatural Assistance made to good Men do not reach to an Exemption from all Errors, or give them any Assurance of a Security from making any Mistakes in Matters of Religion; yet this they may be assur'd of, that while they continue so, they shall not fall into any such Errors, as shall be destructive of their Salvation.

For, supposing that they believe the Scripture to be the Word of God and an infallible Rule of Faith, that the Sense of them, which God intended is certainly true,



true, whatever it is, and that they use their best Endeavours to find out that true Sense, and live and practise according to the Light and Knowledge they have, this being suppos'd, I say, as it rationally may of all good and sincere Christians, we may safely conclude,

*First*, That it is impossible but that they shou'd believe all those Scripture-Truths which were written because they were antecedently necessary to be believ'd, *i. e.* all those Things which relate to the Covenant between God and Man in Christ Jesus; because they are so plainly deliver'd, and so frequently inculcated, that Men of the meanest Capacities with their own Care and Diligence, in Conjunction with the Aids and Assistances that God has appointed, and in the due Use of them, may attain to a sufficient Knowledge thereof: And if, believing aright touching the Covenant, they carefully fulfil the Condition of it requir'd on their Parts, which is an hearty and sincere Obedience, they need not doubt but God will perform his Part, and give them the promised Salvation. And,

*Secondly*, As for those Scripture-Verities which are not so intrinsically necessary in themselves, but to be believ'd upon the Account of God's Veracity, because they

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are reveal'd, I think we may likewise safely conclude, that if any good Christian after he has us'd his best Endeavours, *i. e.* has taken such Pains and Care as ordinary Prudence and Discretion shall advise him to in a Matter of the highest Importance, to find out the true Sense of them, fails, notwithstanding all this, of attaining to it; either God in his Providence will find out some Way to convince him of his Error, and bring him to the Acknowledgment of the Truth, or else that Error will not be fatal to him, but such as God will pardon upon a general Repentance, either God will not leave him finally in it, or it must be such a one, as is not inconsistent with his Salvation. For God can never be suppos'd to punish any good Man eternally, that is desirous above all Things to do his Will, for such Mistakes as with all his Care and Diligence he cou'd not discover or perceive to be so. And thus I have endeavour'd to make out the two doctrinal Points that the Text led me to consider, I shall only draw two or three practical Inferences from the whole, and so conclude.

*First,* Then, if a good Life is the first Step towards the Knowledge of Divine Truths, let us be careful to lay the Foundation aright, to live up to our present  
Light



Light and Knowledge, in a sincere and chearful Obedience to all those practical Principles of Charity, of Justice, of Chastity and Temperance, and all the other fundamental Duties of Religion, which are so plainly reveal'd, and so often press'd upon us, that none that live under the Influence of Gospel-Ordinances can be ignorant of them. If we fail here, all our higher Speculations will be but Castles built in the Air, they may serve to entertain our vain Fancies, or the idle Curiosities of others, but can never make us wise unto Salvation. For, Divine Wisdom or Knowledge rests not in the Brain, but sinks deep into the Heart, and leaves deep Impressions of itself upon the Souls that are possess'd of it, transforming them daily more and more into the Image and Likeness of Christ.

*Secondly,* If Vice and Immorality render Men unfit for the Examination of the Truths of Religion, how dogmatical soever wicked and ungodly Men may be in such Matters, we have no Reason to build upon their Opinions or Authority, because the Promise of knowing the Doctrine of Christ is not made to such Persons, it is to those only that are willing and ready to do the Will of God; as far as they know it: And besides God has threaten'd to infatuate such Men, to give them up to Darkness of Under-

derstanding and strong Delusions, that they shou'd believe a Lye; and we know not but that they may be under the Power of such an Infatuation or Delusion in this or that Particular. Which Consideration, tho' it be no Answer to the Reason of their Opinion, yet it is a sufficient Argument to shew why we shou'd not be concluded by the bare Authority of it.

Thirdly, and Lastly, If a good Life, and a sincere Desire to do the Will of God, have an infallible Promise of such a competent Knowledge of his Ways, as will secure all those that are so qualified either from falling into, or finally persevering in such Errors, as are destructive of, and inconsistent with Salvation; this Consideration will afford great Comfort and Satisfaction to the Minds of good Men, and preserve them from those Doubts and Distractions, which the Variety of Opinions and Disputes in Matters of Religion wou'd otherwise occasion, which disturb the Peace of the Church, and like the *lean Kine*, or *thin Ears of Corn* in *Pharaoh's* Vision, seem to have eaten up the most substantial, *i. e.* the practical Part of our Holy Religion. For, so far as their Consciences can bear them Witness, that they earnestly desire, and use their utmost Endeavours to know God's Will, and practise it according to their Knowledge, so far

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242 *A Good Life is the best Preservative, &c.*

they may be assur'd, they are under his Guidance and Protection, that he will give them such an Understanding in all Things necessary to their Salvation, as shall preserve them from all fatal and destructive Errors, and their involuntary and unavoidable Mistakes will not be imputed to them: *He will hold them by the Right-Hand, and guide them with his Counsel, and afterwards receive them to Glory.*



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## S E R M O N IX.

The Doctrine of Christ's  
Satisfaction Explain'd,  
and Vindicated.

COLOS. i. 14.

*In whom we have Redemption, thro'  
his Blood, even the Forgiveness of  
our Sins.*

**I**N discoursing on these Words, I shall endeavour, with God's Assistance, to illustrate the Doctrine of Christ's Satisfaction, which this Text of Scripture leads me to consider; by shewing in what Sense we are said to have *Redemption thro' his Blood, even the Forgiveness of our Sins.* And in Order hereunto, I shall,

*First*, Deliver, as plainly as I can, what the Church teaches us to believe in this Matter, and what the Opinion of those is, that oppose the receiv'd Doctrine.

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*Second-*



*Secondly*, Consider, whether there be any sufficient Reason or Foundation for that Opposition.

*First*, That we may the readier proceed in the Disquisition of the Truth, I shall deliver as plainly as I can, what the Church teaches us to believe in this Matter, &c.

Now, we are taught to believe, That God Almighty willing to restore lapsed Man to his Favour, and all the Privileges and Advantages consequent upon that, which they had forfeited by their Disobedience, and intending to enter into a New Covenant with them, and to proffer new Terms of Salvation to all that wou'd accept of them, determin'd to do it in such a Manner as might best suit with his own Justice, the Honour of his Laws, and Authority of his Government, and leave the most sensible Impressions upon their Minds, both of his Hatred to Sin, and of his tender Love and Compassion towards his poor lapsed Creatures; and accordingly decreed, that his Eternal and only begotten Son shou'd invest himself with humane Nature, and appear in the World to negotiate this Peace and Reconciliation with Mankind; and to this End, after he had given them a perfect Pattern of an holy Life, made a full Discovery of his Father's Will, and propos'd the new Terms of Salvation, Faith in God through his

his Name, and Repentance from Dead Works, that he shou'd ratify that Covenant by the Expiatory Sacrifice of himself, that he shou'd die for us and in our Stead, and that this shou'd as fully satisfy the Divine Justice, as if we in our own Persons, had undergone the Punishment due to our Sins, which was Eternal Death. And we are taught, that when the Fulness of Time came, our Blessed Lord did accordingly appear, and tabernacle in our Nature, and after he had finish'd his Prophetical Office, in revealing the Will of his Father, and given an Example of such a holy and innocent Life as he requir'd of his Followers, that he became our High-Priest, and with the Sacrifice of himself made an Atonement for our Sins, God laying upon him the Iniquity of us all, that he dyed for us, and in our Stead, and as our Substitute, having our Guilt transferr'd to him, as the Sins of the Jews were to the Sacrifices which they offer'd for their Atonement, and as in that Case God was pleas'd to accept of the Death and Oblation of a Bullock or a Goat, as a Ransom, and instead of the Sinners Death that offer'd them, so the same merciful God accepted of the Sacrifice of his Son, as a full and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation and Satisfaction



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for us, and in lieu of that Eternal Death, to which we stood obnoxious on the Account of our Sins. And this is laid down in Scripture in such Plainness and Variety of Expressions, that no Part of our Christian Faith seems to be more clearly and unexceptionably deliver'd to us, as where it is said, Ephes. 5. 2. That he gave himself for us an Offering and a Sacrifice to God for a Sweet-smelling Savour: That his Blood purges our Consciences from dead Works, that he bore our Sins in his own Body on the Tree, and by his own Blood enter'd once into the Holy Place, having obtain'd Eternal Redemption for us, Heb. 10. 11. That he laid down his Life for us, John 3. 16, That he suffer'd for our Sins, the Just for the Unjust, that he might bring us to God, 1 Pet. 3. 18. That we are redeemed not with corruptible things, but with the precious Blood of Christ. 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19. That God manifested his Love to us in sending his Son to be a Propitiation for our Sins, 1 John 4. 10. That he hath wash'd us from our Sins in his own Blood. Rev. 1. 5. That he hath redeem'd us to God by his Blood, Rev. 5. 9. God was in him reconciling the World to himself, not imputing their Trespases unto them, making him to be Sin [or a Sin-Offering] for us, who knew no Sin, that we might be the Righteousness of God in him. 2 Cor. 5. 12. 21.

But

But in Opposition to all this clear Scripture Evidence plainly shewing, that our Reconciliation with God is wholly founded upon the Atonement made by the Blood of Christ to free us from the Guilt of Sin, some will not own, that our Blessed Saviour died in our Stead, and offer'd himself a Sacrifice for our Sins, in a proper Sense and Acceptation of the Word; but say, he suffer'd only for the Confirmation of his Doctrine, for an Example of Patience and Resignation to the Divine Will, and in Order to his Resurrection, that he might give an unquestionable Proof of that main Article of his Religion, and Lastly, That by his Death he only merited for himself the Sovereign Power and Authority which he is now invested with at the Right-Hand of his Father, by Vertue of which Power only, and not through the Merit of his Death, he expiates Sin, and reconciles repenting Sinners to the Father, and to establish this Scheme of Divinity, they fly from the plain and easy Sense of those Expressions that relate to that Part of our Saviour's Priestly Office, his *dying for us, redeeming us thro' his Blood, giving his Life a Ransom for us, &c.* and put a remote and figurative Meaning upon them; and for what Reason? Why, because to die for one, to redeem and ransom, are



sometimes taken in a Sense not altogether Parallel to that we here understand them in.

But, by the By, if this be allow'd as a proper Rule in the Interpretation of Scripture, that we are not obliged to understand Words in their first and genuine Sense, and which the natural Force of them does imply, when they may be found in other Places to have a remote and Metaphorical Signification, the whole Gospel may be turn'd into an Allegory, and the Force of all the Doctrines therein contain'd, avoided by some unusual Acceptation of the Words in which they are deliver'd: As for Example, why the Creation of the World, and our Saviour's Resurrection from the Dead, may not, according to this Rule, be understood in a figurative Sense, as well as our Redemption and Reconciliation through his Blood, since Creation and Resurrection are sometimes us'd in a Metaphorical Sense, as well as Redemption and Reconciliation. But to return, you see the main Difference between us, as to this Point of Doctrine, is in short, Whether our Blessed Saviour's Dying for us, and offering himself a Sacrifice for the Sins of the World be to be understood in a proper and natural, or a figurative and Metaphorical Sense, and so I proceed in the next Place,

*Second-*

*Secondly*, To consider the principal Reasons and Arguments wherewith the Opposers of this Doctrine endeavour to support their Opinion.

Now, if there be any Reason why the Sacrifice which our Blessed Saviour offer'd in his own Person to the Father for us, shou'd be understood only figuratively, and not in a proper Sense, as we take it, it must arise, as they alledge it does, either,

*First*, From its Deficiency, or Want of any Thing essential to a real Sacrifice, or,

*Secondly*, From some Inconsistency that is in this Doctrine we teach, either with some of the Divine Attributes, or with the Nature and Design of the Christian Religion.

But that there is no such Deficiency, or Want of any Thing essential to a real Sacrifice, I shall endeavour to evince, by shewing the exact Correspondence that is between the Sacrifice of Christ, and those Levitical Sacrifices instituted by God under the Law. Now, the Sacrifices among the Jews were of Two Sorts, *1st*, *Eucharistical*, such as were offer'd for some Mercies receiv'd, or Blessings continu'd to them by God: Or *Propitiatory*, to make an Atonement for Sins, and of this latter Sort was the Sacrifice of Christ, which we are speaking of, with which, in the Nature and End of them, and in several material Circumstances, you will find that it had a very exact Agreement.

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The common Notion which the Jews had of Expiatory Sacrifices was, that they were substituted in the Place of those in whose Behalf they were offer'd, and by the Mercy of God accepted of, instead of their own Lives, which they acknowledged was forfeited by Reason of their Sins, if God had thought fit to call them to a strict Account for them. And this Opinion was not only grounded upon a general Tradition, which obtain'd over all the World from the Beginning, but was confirm'd to the Jews by a Positive Institution; God Almighty, when he prohibited the Eating of Blood, telling them expressly, Lev. 17. 11. That he had given it them to make an Atonement with at the Altar; and for this Reason, because it is the Blood that maketh an Atonement for the Soul. Not that the Blood of these Sacrifices had any Efficacy inherent in themselves to do that, but only as they were Typical Prefigurations of, and had Respect to the Sacrifice of Christ, without the shedding of whose Blood there cou'd be no Remission, as to a Spiritual and Eternal Death; inasmuch as that only cou'd purge the Conscience from dead Works.

Now, this Notion of an Expiatory Sacrifice, of the Guilt and Penalty due to the Sinner's being transferr'd to it, and so

taken

taken away, does exactly agree with the Account, which the Holy Ghost gives of the Sufferings and Sacrifice of Christ, as plainly appears from those Places of Scripture, where he is said, Isa. 53. *to bear the Sins of many, to make his Soul an Offering for Sin, to be wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities, and to have had the Iniquities of us all laid upon him*: Where it is said, *That he sanctifieth the People through his Blood, that the Blood of Jesus purgeth us from all Sin, that he gave his Life a Ransom for many, that he was made a Propitiation for our Sins, &c.* From which, and many more Instances that might be given, it plainly appears, that the Sacrifice of Christ, inasmuch as it was made for us, and in our Stead, to answer those Punishments to which Sin had rendered us obnoxious, and to be a Ransom and Propitiation for us, was a truly Expiatory Sacrifice, and of the same Nature with, tho' of infinitely greater Vertue and Efficacy than those instituted under the Levitical Law, which related to it as a Thing typify'd and prefigur'd by them. But this Agreement will still more clearly appear by comparing some material Circumstances wherein they answer'd each other. And,

*First,* The High-Priest, before he cou'd appear in the Presence of God to make  
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Atonement, was to sanctify himself; and accordingly our Blessed Saviour, before his going into the Garden, says, John 17. *For their Sakes I sanctifie myself*, intimating, that he was then preparing to enter upon the Priestly Office, in Order to offer up himself for the Sins of the World, and as the High-Priest was to be Consecrated to his Office by the Sprinkling of the Blood of the Sacrifice, *Exod. 29. 20.* So our Blessed Lord in his Agony in the Garden, did Consecrate his own Person with the Effusion of his Blood, as approved of God to be a Priest for ever after the Order of *Melchisedec, i. e.* both King and Priest, never to cease, or be succeeded by any, 'till all shall be deliver'd up to the Father.

Again, We read, that on the great Day of Expiation, when the Bullock and the Goat were offer'd on the Altar, the High-Priest carry'd the Blood within the Veil, and set it down before the *Shechinah*, or Cloud of Glory, wherewith Atonement was made for the Sins of the Priests and People: And in the same Sacrificatory Stile our Lord being come an High-Priest of good Things to come, is said, to have enter'd into the Holy Place with his own Blood, having obtain'd Eternal Redemption for us; *Not into the Holy Place made with Hands, but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the* Pre-

Presence of God for us. Levit. 16. 27. And whereas it is said, that the Bullock and Goat that were slain for Sin-Offerings, were to be carry'd without the Camp, and burnt, this the Apostle tells us was fulfill'd, inas-much as our blessed Lord, our Sin-Offering and Sacrifice of Atonement, that he might sanctifie the People with his own Blood, suffer'd without the Gate. Again, lastly, to mention no more, as in every Sin-Offering the Person that brought it laid his Hand upon the Head of it, making Confession of his Sin, disburthening himself, as it were, of his Sin, and laying it upon the Sacrifice; so particularly, at the Consecration of the Scape-Goat, in the fore-cited Chapter of Leviticus, Ver. 21. The High-Priest was to lay his Hands upon the Head of it, confessing over it all the Iniquities of the Sons of Israel, and all their Trespases, and all their Sins, and to put them upon the Head of the Goat, and the Text says, Ver. 22. of this Chapter, *The Goat shall bear upon him all their Iniquities into a Land not inhabited.* Now, what greater Analogy can there be to this than what is said concerning the Death and Sufferings of our Saviour, That God laid upon him the Iniquities of us all, that he bore our Sins on his own Body, that he was the Lamb of God that took away the Sins of the World? &c.

And



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And thus you see, both in the Nature and Design of the Things, and in some material Circumstances of them, what Analogy and Agreement there is between the Sacrifice of Christ, and those which were the Types and Prefigurations of it under the Law. Nay, so exactly have the Holy Pen-Men drawn the Parallel between them, that it has been observ'd, that they have not left one Phrase relating to Expiatory Sacrifices in the Old Testament, which they have not applied to the Death of Christ in the New; insomuch that they cou'd not possibly have deliver'd the receiv'd Doctrine concerning Christ's Satisfaction more fully and appositely, and more in Contradiction to the Sense of those who oppose it, than they have done: So that there does not appear any Reason upon the Account of its Deficiency, or wanting any essential Properties of a Real Sacrifice; why we shou'd understand the Sacrifice of Christ to be such only in the Figurative and Metaphorical Sense of the Word. I come now in the next Place to consider,

*Secondly,* Whether there be any Incompatibility or Inconsistency with any of the Divine Attributes, or the Design of the Christian Religion, in the receiv'd Doctrine of Christ's Satisfaction; which may incline us to receive the History of his Sufferings,

not

not in a proper, but figurative Sense. Now, that which the Opposers of this Doctrine do chiefly insist upon, is,

*First*, That there was no Necessity for such a Satisfaction to be made by Suffering, and consequently it wou'd be inconsistent with the Goodness of God to exact it at all.

*Secondly*, Supposing it were necessary, yet to punish an innocent Person for the guilty, wou'd not be consistent with God's Justice.

*Thirdly*, Supposing it necessary that God shou'd punish Sin, and consistent with his Justice, that he shou'd do it in the innocent Person of his Son, yet how is this reconcileable with the Freeness of Grace and Reconciliation asserted in the Gospel?

These are the Foundation, I say, on which all the main Objections against Christ's Satisfaction are built, and I shall consider them particularly, but with all the Brevity and Plainness that I can.

*First*, Then, Those who are for Absolute Remission of Sins without Satisfaction, ground their Opinion on this, that the Right  
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of punishing Sinners does result from the absolute Power and Dominion which God has over his Creatures; and he, being the offended Party, may part with his Right without any intervening Satisfaction or Compensation; and since he is a God of infinite Mercy, and takes no Delight either in the Death or Sufferings of his Creatures, it is most agreeable with those Attributes, that being willing to be reconcil'd to Mankind, he shou'd do it unconditionally and without any such Satisfaction, as shou'd arise from their Sufferings. But the fundamental Mistake in this Argumentation is, in supposing the Right of punishing to depend merely on God's absolute Power and Dominion over us; Whereas, in this Respect of punishing Offenders, he is not to be consider'd in the Relation of a mere Lord, but as he is the Governour of the World, and has given Laws, according to which he will reward and punish his Subjects, and therefore as he stands in Relation of a Governour, the Exercise of his Dominion is restrain'd to a Subserviency to the Ends of his Government; and the Distribution of Rewards and Punishments must be with Respect to those Ends, his own Honour, the Honour of his Laws, and the Good of those whom he does govern; all which do require, that he shou'd give some remarkable Testimony

of

of his Severity against Sin by the exemplary punishing of it some Way or other. In every well-order'd State the Measure of Punishment is not so much taken from the Nature of the Crimes, as the Influence they may have upon the Public, and when Magistrates punish the Injury which one Person does another, they do it, not so much by Way of Compensation to him that has suffer'd the Injury, as, because the passing it by wou'd be a Contempt upon the Authority of the Laws, and be an Encouragement to others to do the same, which wou'd tend to the Subversion of the whole Government, and so in God's Government of the World, seeing an Impunity for Sin wou'd necessarily introduce a Contempt of himself and his Laws, and tend to the Increase of Wickedness and Impiety, it seems necessary that God shou'd exert his Justice in punishing Sin in such a Manner, as shou'd vindicate himself and his own Honour to the World, and prevent the Consequences of such an Impunity. And accordingly for these Ends and Reasons, did God pitch upon that Method of punishing our Sins in the Person of our Saviour, as most proper to manifest his own Honour, and the Authority of his Government, by requiring such a valuable Satisfaction for Sin, and such as was most apt



to deter Men from the Prosecution of that which he punish'd so severely in his own Son, for, *if God did thus by the green Tree, what will he do by the dry?* If Innocency itself suffer'd so much on the Account of Sin, what must they expect who continue in open Rebellion against God? But,

*Secondly*, Supposing it necessary that God shou'd punish Sin, yet it may seem inconsistent with his Justice, that an innocent Person shou'd suffer for the Guilty. But in Answer to this we must observe, that it is agreeable both to Scripture, and the common Consent of Mankind, that in some Cases a Person may justly suffer and be punish'd for the Demerits of others as the Cause or Reason of his Punishment, of which he himself is wholly innocent. This God solemnly declares in the second Commandment, *Exod. 20. 3. That he will visit the Sins of the Fathers upon the Children.* Thus Canaan was punish'd for the Sins of his Father Cham, and the good King Josiah and his People were punish'd for the Sins of his Grand-Father Manasse. *2 Kings 23.* And if it be suggested here, that in these Instances, the Sufferers had Sins of their own, which occasion'd God's imputing the Sins of others to them, this signifies little; for they did

did either suffer for the Sins of others; as the Reason and Cause of their Punishment; or for their own; if for their own, as they imitated the sinful Courses of their Fathers; then they did not suffer for the Sins of others, which is directly contrary to what the Scripture asserts; and if they suffer'd for the Sins of others, as the Cause of their Suffering, then we must own, since God the Righteous Judge cannot do any Thing unjustly, that in some Cases one Person may justly be punish'd for another's Demerits, as the Cause and Reason of his Punishment of which he himself is innocent; he may have Guilt in other Respects deserving Punishment, but that Guilt is not consider'd always as the Cause and Reason why he is punished. And this is also agreeable to the common Consent of Mankind, as appears in Children's being punish'd for their Fathers Treasons with the Forfeiture of their Honours and Estates, in their esteeming it lawful to kill Hostages, upon the Breach of Articles of Peace, and Sureties (when such Substitutions are allow'd) in Capital Matters, if the guilty Person, for whom they are bound to answer Body for Body, does not appear.

Now, if Scripture and common Reason, on which the Consent of Mankind is grounded, do allow it to be just for a



competent Authority, in some Cases, to transfer Punishment from one Person to another, certainly it must be much more unquestionably so, where there is not only an unexceptionable Authority that requires it, but where the Party also, that is to suffer for another, does freely and voluntarily consent to undergo it, and substitutes himself in the Place of the Offender that shou'd otherwise suffer, and who has what he is to part with in his Behalf, wholly at his own Disposal. And this was the Case of our Blessed Saviour. He had Power to lay down his own Life; and when God requir'd him so to do, he freely and voluntarily laid it down for our Sakes, and, as our Substitute and Representative; and underwent such a Punishment, as tho' it was not the same in kind that our Sin deserv'd, yet such as God was pleas'd to accept of in as full Satisfaction for our Sins, as if he had; inasmuch as by this Method, all those Ends, for which Justice requires that Offenders shou'd be punished, were sufficiently answer'd: For all judicial Punishments are intended either, (1<sup>st</sup>, For the Reformation of the Offender; or, 2<sup>dly</sup>, For an Example to deter others; or, lastly, to preserve the Honour of the Prince, and the Authority of his Laws. Now, all these Ends of Punishment are effectually

answer'd in this Dispensation. For, what can conduce more to the reforming Sinners, and deterring them from the Prosecution of their evil Ways, than the Consideration of God's Hatred and Detestation of Sin, so clearly manifested and exemplify'd, in his punishing it so severely in the Person of his Well-beloved Son? For, if he spared not his only Son, the Substitute and Representative of Sinners, much less will he spare his wilful and stubborn Enemies, who are resolv'd to persist in their Rebellion, and reject all those wise and gracious Methods, which he has taken to save them. And by this Means he has also sufficiently consulted both his own Honour, and the Authority of his Laws, by making it appear, that without a sufficient Satisfaction made for it, his Justice wou'd not suffer him to pardon our Disobedience, to clear the Guilty, or let the Transgressors of his Laws go unpunish'd.

*Thirdly,* I come now in the last Place, to consider, supposing it necessary that God shou'd punish Sinners, and that it is consistent with his Justice to do it in the Person of his Son, freely undergoing it for us, and in our Stead, whether this Method be so irreconcilable, as is pretended, with that Freeness of Grace in the Redemption of Mankind, so much set forth in the New Testament.



Now, I think it very evident, that the Freedom of God's Grace, tho' it be not exclusive of all Conditions either on God's Part or ours, does sufficiently manifest itself in several Respects. There are two Things which are the necessary Consequences of Sin, the Misery it brings upon the Author of it, and the Dishonour done to God by the Contempt of his Authority, in the Violation of his Laws. As to the former, the Penalty to which Sinners had render'd themselves obnoxious, it is freely forgiven to all truly penitent Sinners; and for the Dishonour done to God, by his accepting of an Expiatory Sacrifice for it in the Person of Jesus Christ as to us, 'tis no less freely remitted; he laid our Iniquities upon him, and he bore the Chastisement of our Sins, and we ourselves were thereby exempted from Suffering. In strict Justice, God might have required us to make Satisfaction for our Sins, by suffering Eternal Death in our own Persons; and thus to accept of it in the Person of another was an Act of free Grace, and an Instance of God's unspeakable Love and Tenderness to his poor Creatures. I might add to this the Easiness of the Terms upon which Salvation is promis'd under the New Covenant, his accepting of our sincere

vere Endeavours instead of absolute and unfinning Obedience; as also the great and unspeakable Rewards that he has provided for us, so vastly disproportionable to the best Services that we are able to perform; on each of which Accounts the wonderful Love of God and the Freedom of his Grace do sufficiently manifest themselves. But this may suffice to shew the Truth of what I have been proving, viz. That God's punishing Sin in the Person of his Son Jesus, and thereby receiving Satisfaction for it, is reconcileable with the Freedom of his Grace in the Remission of Sin, set forth in the New Testament.

And thus I have endeavour'd to set forth the Doctrine of Christ's Satisfaction, and with as much Plainness and Perspicuity as I possibly cou'd: And I have shewn, that there can be no Reason, either upon the Account of its wanting any Thing essential to a real Expiatory Sacrifice, or of any Inconsistency in the Doctrine, either with the Goodness or Justice of God, or the Nature of the Christian Religion, why we ought not to believe that our Blessed Saviour dyed in our Stead, and was a Sacrifice for Sins, in the proper and genuine Sense and Acceptation of the Word.

And from the whole many useful Inferences may be drawn; from God's punishing Sin so severely in the Person of his Well-



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beloved and only begotten Son, Sinners may perceive what little Grounds they have to hope for Impunity, if they neglect that great Salvation, which was purchas'd for them at no less a Price than the precious Blood of the Son of God. When a penitent Soul labours under the Weight and Burthen of his past Sins, and feels the Terrors of the Lord, and of a Judgment to come, the severe Lashes, the bitter Reproofs, and sad Forebodings of an awaken'd offended Conscience, the Consideration of that meritorious Sacrifice, which our Eternal and Compassionate High-Priest hath offer'd up to God for us, and whereby he has purchas'd Pardon and Peace, and Reconciliation with our Heavenly Father, for all that with a true Faith and sincere Repentance will apply the Benefits of that Sacrifice to themselves; this Consideration will dispel all dark and gloomy Thoughts, and be as a sovereign and refreshing Balm to his wounded Spirit.

*Lastly*, From the infinite Love of our dear Redeemer, in freely undergoing a bitter and ignominious Death, to put us into a Capacity of regaining that Happiness which we had forfeited by our Sins, we shou'd be mov'd to make the best Returns we can of Love and Gratitude for such infinite and boundless Mercy, to be patient in Tribulation, not to repine, or murmur, or despond under any Affliction or Calamities that befall us; but to

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submit and resign our own Wills in all Things entirely to the Will of God; to be ready to part with all that is dear to us, our Fortunes, our Ease, our Liberty, even Life itself, when the Defence of his Truth, and the promoting his Honour and Glory in the World shall require it; glorying in the Cross of Christ, and rejoicing in being made Partakers of his Sufferings; knowing that these light Afflictions which are but for a Moment, will work a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory. These and many more such Consequences flow so naturally from the Doctrine I have been explaining, that I shall leave them to the Improvement of your own private and serious Meditations, and add no more, but beseech Almighty God, who has given us his only Son, to be unto us both a Sacrifice for Sin, and an Example of godly Life, that he will give us Grace, that we may alway most thankfully receive that his inestimable Benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed Steps of his most holy Life, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.





## SERMON X.

The Reasonableness of Believing, without the Evidence of Seeing.

JOHN XX. 29.

*Blessed are they that have not seen,  
and yet have believ'd.*



Here are our Saviour's Words to St. Thomas, who being absent at the Time when the Lord had appear'd to the rest of the Disciples after his Resurrection, Ver. 19. declar'd his Distrust of what they had attested concerning that Appearance, and that, *Except he should see in his Hands the Print of the Nails, and put his Finger into the Print of the Nails, and thrust his Hand into his Side, he wou'd not believe,* that it was really he, but that some Spirit had deluded them in the Form of their Crucify'd Lord. Our Saviour therefore, to convince St. Thomas, and to remove what-

ever

ever might obstruct the Belief of so necessary an Article of Faith, in the Minds of his Followers, vouchsafes to give him such sensible Evidence of his being risen from the dead, as he himself had required. For, Ver. 26, 27. after eight Days, when his Disciples were within, and Thomas with them, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you, then said he to Thomas, Reach hither thy Finger, and behold my Hands, and reach hither thy Hand, and thrust it into my Side, and be not faithless but believing; then, upon this Conviction, Thomas answer'd, and said, My Lord, and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believ'd; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believ'd. Which is as much as if he had said, "Thou hast now believ'd, upon the Attestation of thy own Senses, upon such Evidence as thou must of Necessity give thy Assent to; but happy and blessed are they, who, though they have not such an irresistible Evidence to build their Belief of my Gospel upon, do, nevertheless, with humble and unprejudic'd Minds, receive and embrace the saving Truths therein contain'd, and chearfully yield their Assent unto them, upon such Evidence as is in itself sufficient, without requiring or insisting upon more."

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The Words may be consider'd with Respect to all those, who before our Saviour's Appearance in the World, did rely upon the Promises, that God made of saving lapsed Man, by sending his Son to redeem and ransom him from the Guilt and Dominion of his Sins; who, through the Veil of outward Ordinances, in all the Types and Shadows under the *Mosaic* Dispensation, had an Eye to the Substance and Archetype at which they pointed, the great High-Priest and Bishop of their Souls; who, when the Fulness of Time came, was, by the Sacrifice of his own Blood, to make an Atonement for the Sins of the whole World; who believ'd those Truths, and built their Hopes of Salvation upon them: But they seem principally to respect those succeeding Generations of Men, that shou'd come into the World after the Accomplishment of this mysterious Work of their Redemption, who, though they cou'd not be immediate Witnesses of those sacred Truths that shou'd be transmitted down to them in the Gospel, shou'd nevertheless close with them, and give their full Assent to them upon such Evidence, as shou'd in itself be sufficient to ground a rational Faith upon, that shou'd believe the holy Word of God, and have their Lives and Conversations influenc'd and directed by those sacred Truths, which wou'd make them

them wise unto Salvation. Blessed are they that have not seen, &c.

From the Words thus explain'd, I hope it will be no unprofitable Undertaking (and I wish the sad Confusion and Distraction of the Times we are fallen into, when Scepticism, Heresy, and Infidelity, and as a necessary Consequence thereof, a strange Spirit of Loosness and Immorality reign so universally among us, did not make it extreamly necessary) if I endeavour by God's Assistance, to establish your Hearts in such a lively Faith of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the holy Doctrines contain'd in it, as may keep you steady in your most holy Profession, and entitle you to that Blessedness, which our Saviour here promises to them that believe in him; and to effect this,

First, I shall enquire, *Whether we, even at this Distance from the Time of its Delivery, have not sufficient Evidence to ground a firm Belief of the Divine Authority of the Gospel upon, and of its being the Word of God; and if it appear that we have, Then,*

Secondly, I shall shew the Unreasonableness and Absurdity of some Men's staggering at the believing some mysterious Truths therein contain'd, because they cannot fully comprehend them.

Thirdly, To set this whole Matter in as clear and useful a Light as I can, I shall advance and prove these two Propositions, relating to the Nature, Measure and Degrees of the As-  
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sent we are to give it a such a Revelation, and so free them from the Difficulties that the Sophistry, and perverse Reasoning of some Men have endeavour'd to raise about them, viz.

First, That in the Gospel are certain Truths reveal'd by God, which are not within the Power of humane Reason either to discover or comprehend; i. e. that there are Evangelical Mysteries.

Secondly, That such mysterious Truths are proper Objects of Faith, and require the highest Degree of Assent to them upon the Authority of the Revealer, tho' we cannot comprehend them.

Fourthly, I shall conclude, with offering two or three Considerations, which may help to stifle any Suggestions of Infidelity, which may arise in our Minds about these Matters.

First, As to the Evidence which we have for the Divine Authority of the Gospel, it is such as can leave no Doubt or Scruple upon the Mind of any honest, ingenuous, and rational Person: And I ground my Assertion upon these two Principles of unquestionable Truth, the one respecting the Kind, the other the Degree of Evidence requisite for the establishing any Truth, which I lay down as the Foundation of my following Discourse.

First,

First, That different Kinds of Truths, tho' in themselves equally certain, do of Necessity require different and peculiar Kinds of Evidence; as that every Triangle has three Angles equal to two Right ones, that you and I now see one another, that there are such Countries as *Peru* and *Mexico*, &c. These are equally true, but the Evidence we have of them is different; the First we are convinc'd of by Mathematical Demonstration, the Second we perceive by our Senses; and the Last we believe upon the credible Testimony of those that have been in those Countries, and given an Account of them. And if any Man shou'd be so senseless as to say, he did not believe there were such Places, as those I mention'd, because he does not see them, or because we cannot Mathematically demonstrate Matters of Fact to him, he may with Parity of Reason deny that the Sun shines, because he does not hear it, or that there is such a Thing as Sound, because he does not perceive it with his Eye. As every Organ is adapted to receive *Species* from its proper Object only, as we cannot see with our Ears, nor hear with our Eyes, so certain Truths have their different Kinds of Evidence, and we must acquiesce in that Kind, which is proper to the Nature of the Thing we make our Enquiry about.

Secondly,



Secondly, *That when any Thing is propos'd to us, with all the Evidence that the Nature of it is capable of, tho' not with such irresistible Proofs as Truths of another Kind may be made out to us, yet we cannot reasonably deny our Assent to it: Dissenting upon such Evidence being as certain an Argument of a weak and injudicious Mind, as being credulous or assenting upon none, or what is in itself insufficient.* If therefore it can be made appear, that there is the highest Degree of that Kind of Evidence which is proper to Things of that Nature, for the Divine Authority of the Gospel, then my Assertion, *That no honest, ingenuous, and reasonable Person can doubt of it,* will hold good.

Now, that there was such a Person in the Country of *Judea*, about Seventeen Hundred Years ago, as Jesus Christ, who profess'd himself to be the Son of God, that he was own'd to be so by a Voice from Heaven, that he liv'd a most holy, pure, and innocent Life, wrought many Miracles, that he declared, that all that shou'd believe in him, and shou'd be baptized, shou'd be saved, and whosoever did not, shou'd be damn'd; that he dyed for us, and rose again the Third Day; that the Apostles believ'd on him, and being miraculously empower'd from above, preach'd, and committed to Writing those holy Truths, which he had taught them; and those very Writings are  
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transmitted down to us : These Things being a Series of Matters of Fact, the Evidence we require for the Truth of them must be such as the Nature of Matters of Fact does require; which is either,

*First*, Such as a Man acquires immediately, without the Intervention of any external Testimony, either by his own Sensations, as, that Snow is white, Fire hot, &c. or by the Faculties of his own Mind, as, that every æquilateral Triangle has equal Angles, that he who does Things above Nature must be God, it being peculiar to that Infinite Being so to do.

*Secondly*, Such, as not being immediate Witnesses of it ourselves, we receive, and can only receive from the Testimony of others, who, if they are unexceptionable, either upon the Account of the Knowledge of the Matters they deliver to us; or their Veracity, in relating them according to their Knowledge; we may ground an indubitable Certainty upon what they relate. Upon this sort of Evidence we believe that there are such Places as *China* and *Japan*; that there were such Persons in the World as *William* the Conqueror, and King *Henry* the Eighth : And Things of this Nature, duly evidenc'd, we give as entire Credit to, as if we ourselves had a sensible Conviction of them.

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**Now,**



Now, the Evidence which we at this Distance of Time have of the Truth of these Matters of Fact before related, is of the latter sort; it arises from the Testimony of those who were Eye-Witnesses, the Apostles and first Believers, convey'd down to us by an universal Tradition: But they had other Motives to ground their Belief in Christ upon, and to convince them, that he was the Son of God, that he was true, and taught the Word of God in Truth, which offer'd themselves to their own personal Experience and immediate Observation: As,

*First*, They had great Reason to believe in him, and to assent to the Truths he reveal'd to them, upon the Account of the Excellency of his Person, *While they beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten Son of God, full of Grace and Truth,* John 1. 14. We cannot indeed frame any Ideas of the Resplendency of a God incarnate, because we did not see it; yet doubtless, though he came not to display the Brightness of the Godhead in the Tabernacle of humane Nature, we may in general believe, that an Air of Divinity appear'd in all his Demeanour, like the Morning Sun shining through the Mists and Vapours he has drawn from the Earth. And that he gave a greater Manifestation of the Divinity of his Person sometime than others,

others, seems deduceable from several Passages in the Gospel; as at *Nazareth*, when they attempted to throw him down the Precipice whereon the City stood, the Text says, *That he went through the midst of them*; as also when he whipt the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, and in the Garden, when the Officers who came to seize him, as soon as he had told them, that it was he whom they sought, *went backward and fell to the Ground*: John 18. 6. At all which Times it is at least highly probable, that some strange surprizing Emanations of his Glory shi'd forth through the Veil of his Flesh, and struck them with Horrour and Amazement, though it made no lasting Impression upon their harden'd Hearts. I might upon this Head add several other Motives, which might facilitate their believing in him, as the Completion of several Prophecies in his Person, the Excellency of his Doctrine, and the great Integrity, Simplicity, and Innocency that appear'd in his Conversation, the whole Design that he seem'd to carry on being only to promote the Happiness of Mankind; which wou'd force the most obstinate to make this Confession, that if God cou'd and wou'd take humane Nature upon him, he wou'd have liv'd just such a Life, and given just such Laws for the Government of



Mankind. But besides these Motives to believe, which the Apostles and first Believers had from the Excellency of his Person, the Purity of the Doctrine, and Innocency of the Life and Conversation of our Saviour, which of themselves are more than concur to the validating any merely humane Testimony, besides these, they had,

*Secondly,* An unexceptionable Evidence for the Divine Authority of the holy Doctrines he deliver'd arising from the many Miracles which they saw him perform for the Confirmation of them. They saw him turn Water into Wine, they saw him, with the Breath of his Mouth, give Light to the Blind, make the Lame walk, cast out Devils, call the Dead to Life again; they saw him walk upon the Water as on dry Ground, and twice feed several Thousands with a few Barley-Loaves and a few small Fishes, and Fragments at each Time taken up, more than what was at first set before the Multitude, *Mark* 8. 19. And Lastly, they saw him, after he had suffer'd a cruel and ignominious Death, and been two Days in the Grave, by his own intrinsic Power and Energy, rise up again the third Day, triumphing over the Powers of Death and the Grave. These and the like irrefragable Instances of his Omnipotent Power, for no less cou'd have so superseded the settled and establish'd Laws of Nature; convinc'd them that he

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was the Son of God, and that in *him dwelt the Fulness of the Godhead bodily*, and so they readily believ'd in his Word; Veracity being as inseparable an Attribute of the Divine Nature as Omnipotency.

Thus the Apostles believ'd in Christ upon the immediate Evidence they had of his being the Son of God, arising from the Excellencies they observ'd in his Person, the Purity of his Doctrine, Innocency, and Holiness of Life and Conversation, and from the many Miracles he perform'd for the Confirmation of his Word. And when, after our Saviour's Ascension into Heaven, and his sending them the Holy Spirit to lead them and guide them into all Truth, they began to preach the Gospel, which they had immediately receiv'd from God, to the World, the first Converts believ'd in Christ upon their Testimony, being convinc'd of the Truth of it by Miracles which they saw God work by them. For as they cou'd not but attribute the Miracles they saw to the Power of God working by them, so they cou'd not but impute the Saving-Word to the same God speaking by them, *Receiving it, as St. Paul says of the Thessalonians, not as the Word of Man, but as it was in Truth, the Word of God.*

To see a Company of illiterate Persons, in an Hour's Time, become able to speak to a great Variety of Nations in their own



Languages, to see a poor Fisher-Man restore a lame Man to his Legs, to hear him bespeak a dead Man alive, and a living Man dead with the Breath of his Mouth, and to mention only one Thing more, to see the wonderful Progress of the Gospel of the Crucify'd Jesus, notwithstanding the seeming Unfitness of the Instruments that were to propagate it, a few illiterate Fisher-Men and Tent-Makers, and the Disagreeableness of the Doctrines of it to the prejudicated Opinions, corrupt Affections, Ease and Interests of Mankind; to see it, I say, notwithstanding all these powerful Obstructions, spreading and diffusing itself, in less than Fifty Years, through the greatest Part of the then known World, the whole Roman Empire; these and the like miraculous Instances of the Power of God accompanying the first Propagation of the Gospel, were sufficient Motives to make those that liv'd in the first Ages of the Church, while the Gifts of Miracles continued, believe that it was from God, being as such own'd by him.

Thus far we see the Divine Authority of the Gospel was ascertain'd to Men chiefly upon the Conviction they receiv'd from the Miracles that attended the first Delivery and Propagation of it, which they believ'd upon the Testimony of their own Senses and immediate Observation. But now, though the Faith of succeeding Generations be built up-  
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on the same Basis with theirs, yet the Evidence and Conveyance of them is different, the same Miracles which induc'd them to believe, do the same to us; but the Evidence they had was from their Senses, they saw and believ'd; but the Evidence we have of them arises to us from their Testimony, duly transmitted down to us by universal Tradition; which was the second Sort of Evidence, that I told you we have for all Matters of Fact, done at any Distance of Time or Place from us, it is grounded upon the Testimony of others; who, if they are unsuspected, both upon the Account of the Knowledge of the Matters they relate, and their Fidelity in relating them, their Testimony is a sufficient Foundation for any Man to build his Faith upon. And that the Apostles and other first Publishers of the Gospel were such, is not to be doubted; their being Eye-Witnesses of the Things which they have recorded and transmitted down to us, exclude all Suspicion of the former; and their renouncing this World, and all the Comforts and Satisfactions of it, suffering severe Persecutions, and cruel Deaths, for the Sake of those Truths they left us, sufficiently assure us of their Faithfulness and Sincerity. And as there is not any Probability, not so much as a reasonable Presumption, that there shou'd be any Cheat or Imposture on their Parts



that first committed those Sacred Truths to Writing, and deliver'd them to the Church; so there is as little Reason to doubt of any Imposture in their Descent to us, being handed down to us by the unanimous Attestation of all Christians in all the successive Ages of Christianity, it being next to an Impossibility, that they shou'd all have conspir'd to put a Trick and a Sham upon us, and this being the only Way, whereby Truths of this Nature can be convey'd unto us (for we cannot have any sensible Conviction of Things done 16 or 1700 Years ago) then according to the second Principle laid down in the Beginning of this Discourse, we cannot reasonably deny our Assent to the Truth and Divine Authority of the Gospel.

But Here is nothing more then to ground any Doubt upon, but a bare Possibility that Things might be otherwise than they are transmitted down to us, there may have been no such Miracles done by our Saviour and his Apostles, they may have been deluded themselves, and deluded others, and so the Sham may have been transmitted down to us, and so we may be all in a Mistake. But if this be admitted for a reasonable Ground of doubting and disbelieving, all Historical Evidence and Moral Certainty must go for nothing, and may be cashier'd out of the World. We believe the Murder

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of King *Charles* the First, that there were such Persons as King *Henry* the Eighth and Queen *Elizabeth*, that there are such Cities as *Rome*, and *Paris*, and *Constantinople*; and all these Things we think ourselves as much ascertain'd of upon the Account of the common Faith that Man reposes in Man, that we do no more doubt of them, than we do of a Whole's being greater than a Part, or Two and Three's making Five; and if any Man, because there is a Possibility that the World may have conspir'd to impose upon us in any of these three Instances, shou'd disbelieve or question the Truth of any of these Matters of Fact I have mention'd, we shou'd undoubtedly conclude him out of his Senses. So that, to our great Comfort be it consider'd, the Truth of our Holy Religion is built upon so sure a Foundation, that no Methods can be us'd to overthrow it, but what will at the same Time overturn all Truth and Certainty, and the common Faith of Mankind, and conclude the whole Complex of Mankind to be nothing but a Pack of Cheats, Knaves, and Impostors; which must be as unreasonable, as uncharitable a Suggestion.

If Matters of Faith and Religion were propounded to us in such a Way as to necessitate our Assent to them, it wou'd be no Vertue to believe; The Freedom of Obedience,



dience, which is the Foundation of Virtue and Vice, and of the Rewards and Punishments that attend them, wou'd be taken away. No Man is thought worthy of Reward for believing or acknowledging that two even Numbers added together make an even Number, or assenting to any Conclusion in Mathematicks clearly and evidently demonstrated to him. It is therefore sufficient for Matters of Faith, that they are propos'd with such Evidence, that a docible and unprejudic'd Mind, upon a serious and impartial Consideration of them, may acquire a moral and indubitable, tho' not an infallible Certainty of them. And thus by believing, we give Testimony of our teachable Dispositions, of our good Inclinations towards Religion, and that we have worthy Thoughts of the infinite Goodness, and Power, and Majesty of God, when we are willing to submit to such Arguments as are in themselves sufficient to ground our Belief upon.

And upon this Account it is, that Atheism and Infidelity have in them the Nature of wilful Sins, and are not Sins of Ignorance and Infirmary; because there is such Evidence for the Truths of Religion, that it is their own Fault, the Perverseness or Prejudice of their Minds, if Men do not believe them. No Man, I believe, in the World ever disbeliev'd the Being of a God, or the Truth

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of Religion when fairly propos'd to him, but who had his Mind pre-engaged to his Lusts and Passions, that had not beforehand resolv'd to continue in the Practice of something that he knew was contrary to that Belief, and so thought it his Interest to wish and believe, if he cou'd, that Things were otherwise; and in that Case, if the Things were in their Nature capable of as clear a Demonstration as any Proposition in *Euclid*, the Sinner wou'd find some Way or other to avoid being concluded by it; he wou'd shut his Eyes against the clearest Light, rather than part with his darling Lust upon his Conviction. And hence likewise it is, that when Two have the Truths of Religion equally evidenc'd to them, and one believes, and the other not, it is not God, but Man himself that makes the Difference, rejecting or receiving the Grace of Faith that accompanies Salvation.

And thus I have gone through the first Thing that I undertook to make out, that we have sufficient Evidence to ground a firm Belief of the Divine Authority of the Gospel upon, and shewn, that it is Mens sinful Lusts, Passions and Prejudices, not their Want of sufficient Evidence that obstructs their Belief of it; and therefore that it is an unreasonable Piece of Scepticism to doubt of the Truths contain'd in the Gospel:  
Which



Which was what I undertook to make out.

Secondly, *The Unreasonableness and Absurdity of some Men's staggering at the believing some mysterious Truths contain'd in the Gospel, because they cannot fully comprehend them; and to evince this, I lay down this as a Principle of undeniable Truth, That whenever we have sufficient Evidence for the Being of any Thing, it is absurd and unreasonable to reject the Belief of it, merely because we cannot fully comprehend the Nature of it:* For if not, if it were reasonable so to do, this strange surprizing Conclusion wou'd necessarily follow, that, however Mankind are pleas'd to pride themselves in the Fancy of being Rational Creatures, yet in Truth they are no more capable of the Knowledge of any Thing, than a Pound of Candles, or so many Faggot-Sticks; there being not in the whole System of Nature one Thing, whose Nature we can be said perfectly and thoroughly to understand. For, not to mention the abstruser Effects of Nature, the Inclination of the Needle in the Compass, the Gravitation of Bodies, the Specifick Vertues of some Plants and Minerals, the continued Propagation of Animals in the same Species; the Digestion and Separation of the several Juices in the Body for the Sustentation of Life, &c. All

which

which we have sufficient Evidence of that they are so, tho' we cannot discover the hidden Springs that produce those Phenomena: The whole Universe is made up of Matter and Spirit, and Sense and Reason assure us, that there are such Things in the World, and yet we can frame no adequate Idea of the Substance of either of them, either of Matter or Spirit. We know some few essential Properties of each of them, indeed, which serve to distinguish them from each other, as that Matter is extended, fills Space, and is susceptible of several different Qualities: And, that a Spirit is a Thinking Being, wills and understands, and is capable of Vertue and Vice, as the other is of sensible Qualities; but what the Substance of either of them is we cannot conceive, much less how they are united together in the Composition of Man. So that we see plainly, that if, when we have sufficient Evidence for the Being of a Thing, we may disbelieve it, barely because we cannot fully comprehend the Nature of it, we must on the same Grounds disbelieve our own Being, and every Thing else.

And if this Absurdity appear so evident in Natural Things, which are the Objects of our Sense and daily Experience, how much more manifest will it appear in Things



Things Supernatural, which 'tis impossible we shou'd ever have known at all, or in any other Degree, but as God has been pleas'd to reveal them to us. The Evidence we have of the Being of all those mysterious Truths contain'd in the Gospel, if I have spoken any Thing to the Purpose in the former Part of this Discourse, is unquestionable; it arises from the Testimony of God himself, who can neither deceive nor be deceiv'd; and therefore, when we find such Mysteries as these plainly reveal'd to us, as the Incarnation of our Saviour, that *God was made Flesh, and dwelt among us*, that tho' there is but One God, yet each of the Three Persons, the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, have the incommunicable Attributes of that One God ascrib'd to them; that there shall be another Life after this, and a Resurrection both of the Just and Unjust, wou'd it not be an unreasonable and absurd Piece of Impudence for us to say, we do not believe them, because we cannot thoroughly understand and comprehend them. We cannot but acknowledge that it is extrinsical to any Truth to be, or not to be comprehended by us; and that we can no more alter the Nature of it by the Conceptions we frame of it, than we can still the Noise of Thunder by stopping our Ears,

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or put out the Light of the Sun by shutting our Eyes, or hiding our Face from it; and consequently, that these Things may be agreeable to the Eternal and fixt Ideas of Truth, though they seem contrary to our present Notions of Things, and bear no Analogy to any Thing that lies within the Verge of our Knowledge or Observation. And therefore since God, who only can comprehend all Truth, has reveal'd these Things to us, all the Arguments which the Wit of Men or Devils may suggest against the Truth of them, can be no more conclusive with an honest and humble Christian, than what a Man that never had his Sight, shou'd bring to prove, that Snow is not white, or a Coal not black, since they have not that Faculty, and that Eye proper to judge of all possible Truths, and that is infinite Wisdom.

I conclude therefore, that it is highly reasonable for us, though we cannot explicate the Modes and Mysteries of Religion, or solve all the Difficulties that attend them, since Divine Revelation has given us sufficient Evidence of the Being of them, firmly to acquiesce in the Belief thereof, and content ourselves to know them in that Degree which God has been pleas'd to manifest them to us, without  
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our endeavouring to comprehend them, or expecting Philosophical Explications of them, whereby we may lose ourselves, but cannot hope to find out incomprehensible Truths, but let us rest in this Resolution, that God has said, and therefore we will believe it.

I shou'd now proceed to the Third Thing that I propos'd to speak to. But, &c.

who only can comprehend all Truth, has reveal'd these Things to us. All the Arguments which the Wit of Men or Devils may suggest against the Truth of them, can be no more conclusive with an honest and humble Christian, than what a Man that never has heard of them, would bring to prove, that they have not that Coal not black, and that it is proper to judge of Locality, and that it is proper to judge of all possible Truths, and that is infinite Wisdom.

I conclude therefore, that it is highly reasonable for us, though we cannot explicate the Modes and Mysteries of Religion, or solve all the Difficulties that attend them, since Divine Revelation has given us sufficient Evidence of the Being of them, firmly to acquiesce in the Belief thereof, and content ourselves to know them in that Degree which God has been pleas'd to manifest them to us without

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S E R

# S E R M O N   X I .

The Reasonableness of Believing, without the Evidence of Seeing.



JOHN XX. 29.

*Blessed are they that have not seen,  
and yet have believ'd.*

**I**N discoursing upon these Words, I endeavour'd from some sure and unquestionable Principles to demonstrate the Truth and Divine Authority of the Gospel, shewing plainly, that even at this Distance from the Time of its Revelation, we have such Evidence both as to the Kind and Degree of it, as can leave no Room for the least Doubt or Hesitation upon honest, ingenuous, and rational Minds; that we have all the Evidence that Matters of that Nature are capable of, and that if any Man deny his Assent to this Doctrine, it must be upon such Principles as will manifestly destroy all Historical Evidence and

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Moral Certainty, and the common Faith which Mankind repose in one another. I shewed you how that the Apostles and first Believers receiv'd those Sacred Truths therein contain'd immediately from Christ, upon the clear Conviction they had of his Being, as he profess'd himself to be the Son of God, arising from the Excellence of his Person, the Holiness and Innocency of his Life, and the many Miracles which they saw him perform for the Establishment and Confirmation of his Doctrines, and that these Men's Testimony was receiv'd by the primitive Christians, because they were Eye-Witnesses of the Things which they deliver'd to them, and cou'd not be suspected guilty of any False-dealing, since they had no temporal Interests they cou'd thereby be suppos'd to serve; but on the contrary, suffer'd severe Persecutions for the Truth of their Testimony, and at last seal'd it with their Blood, and chiefly, because God did own and corroborate their Evidence by the many miraculous Works that he did by them; and since their Times, these holy Truths have been transmitted down to us by universal Tradition, or the Attestation of all Christians in all the successive Ages of Christianity, with all the Evidence that the Nature of the Things will allow of: From whence I concluded that it was an absurd and unreasonable Piece of Scepticism or Infidelity for

for any Man to doubt or disbelieve the Truth or Divine Authority of the Gospel, and this I have likewise insisted upon, as being the Second Thing I propos'd to speak to; I proceed now, according to my intended Method;

Thirdly, *To advance and prove these Two Propositions*, relating to the Nature, Measure and Degrees of the Assent that we are to give to such a Revelation, and so free them from the Difficulties that the Sophistry and perverse Reasoning of some Men have endeavour'd to raise about them, viz.

First, *That in the Gospel are certain Truths reveal'd by God, which are not within the Power of humane Reason either to discover or comprehend; i. e. that there are Evangelical Mysteries.*

Secondly, *That such mysterious Truths are proper Objects of Faith, and require the highest Degree of Assent to them upon the Authority of the Revealer, tho' we cannot comprehend them.*

Now the Truth of the First Proposition, *That in the Gospel, &c.* will appear, if we consider the Foundation and Extent of human Reason on the one Hand, whence it proceeds, and how far it goes; and some of those mysterious supernatural Truths reveal'd



in the Gospel, on the other: Whereby we shall perceive the vast Difference and Disproportion that must of Necessity be between them. Now Reason, as contra-distinguish'd to Faith, I conceive to be, *The Discovery of the Certainty or Probability of some Truths, which we attain to by Reflection upon, and Deduction from such Ideas, as were originally convey'd to, and form'd in our Minds by particular sensible Objects.* As in Nature therefore Water cannot be rais'd above the Height of the Fountain from whence it springs, so, seeing sensible Ideas are the Source from whence all human Reason necessarily flows, it seems as impossible, that of itself it shou'd attain to the Discovery of the Truth of Things supernatural, of which there can be no such Ideas, as it is to conceive how a Man shou'd build an House without laying a Foundation. And if we consider some of those mysterious Truths reveal'd to us in the Gospel, we shall find this true in Fact, that it was not possible we shou'd ever have discover'd them without such a Revelation, as for Instance, the Incarnation of our Saviour, that the Word which *was God, by whom all Things were made, that were made, that he shou'd be made Flesh, and dwell among Men:* That there are Three Persons in the God-Head, that there shall be a Resurrection from the Dead both of the Just and Unjust, &c. That these shou'd be so, are Truths which every

every one, at the first View, is convinc'd we cou'd never have attain'd to upon the Principles of Natural Reason and Knowledge.

And now, that they are reveal'd to us, we know them but in Part, there is something of them undiscover'd still, sufficient to denominate them Mysteries, as what we cannot perfectly know and comprehend. For all Revelation does not take away the Mysteriousness of a Thing, but only such a plenary and adequate Revelation as explicates the whole Essence of it, and leaves nothing in the Nature thereof abstruse or undiscover'd. So far indeed as those mysterious Truths are manifested to us, we may have some Degrees of Knowledge of them, we may know the Meaning and Signification of the Terms in which they are express'd, and we may have some imperfect, defective Knowledge of the Things too; but because there is not a perfect and entire Discovery made of them, that which remains still unknown, the obscure, abstruse, and undiscover'd Part of them, is that which gives them the proper Denominations of Evangelical Mysteries; taking the Word *Mystery* not in the Original Sense and Signification of the Word, as it denoted only something relating to Sacred and Religious Matters, knowable enough in itself, but kept secret and conceal'd from common and vulgar

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Observation, as the Heathen Writers always understood it, but in the improv'd Sense, in which the Fathers and Christian Writers have us'd it, as it signifies something that is so much a Secret in Religion, that it is not within the Power of humane Understanding to make a clear and explicit Discovery of it.

In this Sense, the Incarnation of our Saviour, for Instance, tho' clearly reveal'd to us, as to the Existence or Being of it, is, nevertheless, a Mystery; because, tho' we can frame some *Ideas* to ourselves of the human Soul and Body of our Saviour, by Reason of the Cognation and Affinity they have with our own; and tho' we can have some imperfect Conceptions of his Godhead too, as of a wise, intelligent, and knowing Being, arising from the Perceptions we have of the Actings and Operations of our own Souls, which, as they are Spirits, have some faint and disproportionable Resemblance of the Divine Nature; yet, if any Man think to make a full Discovery, to get a perfect and comprehensive *Idea* of the Godhead, or any of the Attributes and infinite Perfections of it, he will find the Labour and Trouble of his Mind in that Search as vain and ineffectual, as the Expectations of that Clown in the Poet were, when he stood upon the Bank of the River to see when all

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the Water of it shou'd be run out, and the Chanel left dry. Let him frame never such extensive *Ideas* of what is infinite, and multiply them never so often over and over in his Mind, he will never be the nearer having a clear, positive and perfect *Idea* of it; for all that he can possibly discover of it, will bear infinitely less Proportion to what will still remain unknown to him, than a Drop of Water does to the Ocean, the dim Light of a Candle to that of the Sun, or one of those Atoms that play in the Sun-Beam, to the vast Congeries of Matter out of which God fram'd the visible World. And as we cannot have any perfect Knowledge of the infinite Nature and Perfections of God; so neither can we comprehend the Mode or Manner how he was united to the human Nature in the Person of our Saviour, there being nothing within the Compass of our Knowledge, that can give us a perfect *Idea* of that Union, tho' there may be some imperfect, defective Resemblance of it, in that which we perceive to be between our own Souls and Bodies.

So that tho' the Incarnation is plainly reveal'd, as to the Existence or Being of it, and tho' we know something of it, yet there is so much unknown, so much still undiscover'd in it, as is sufficient to give it the Denomination of a Mystery; and the same might be said of the Trinity in Unity,



the Mystical Union betwixt Christ and his Church, the Resurrection of the Body, &c.

But some will say, these Doctrines revealed in the Gospel are call'd *Mysteries*, not by Reason of any Incomprehensibleness, Inconceivableness, or Obscurity that is now in them, but with Respect to what they were before that Revelation. They were always intelligible enough in their own Natures, but call'd *Mysteries*, by Reason of the Veil under which they were hid, which Veil being remov'd now under the Gospel, the Doctrines therein reveal'd are no longer to be reputed *Mysteries*, but plain and intelligible Truths. And to establish this Opinion, they will produce those Texts, where *Mystery* is taken for the whole Gospel, and the whole Body of the Doctrines reveal'd in it, as where the Gospel is stil'd, *The Mystery of Christ, the Mystery of Godliness, the Mystery of Faith, the Revelation of the Mystery which was kept secret since the World began, &c.* which being now, as 'tis said, made manifest, and made known to all Nations for the Obedience of Faith, that Manifestation and Discovery, say they, makes the Gospel and all the Doctrines of it cease to be any longer *Mysteries*. This is the Ground and Foundation of that bold Assertion of the *Unitarians*, that there are now no *Mysteries* in Christianity; upon which they think to justify their perverting and wresting the Scriptures,

tures, and measuring the Truths of Religion by the scanty Rule of their own Fancies and imperfect Reasonings. But all this I think will admit of a very plain and easy Solution;

*First*, We do acknowledge that some Things which were Mysteries before the Gospel-Dispensation, do now entirely cease to be so, as being fully and clearly manifested to us, as, for Instance, St. Paul speaks, *Ephes. 3. 3. of God's calling in the Gentiles, and making them Fellow-Heirs of the same Body, and Partakers of the same Promises with his own People, as of a Mystery, which was not in other Ages made known to the Sons of Men, but is now reveal'd*; there remains nothing further to be known and discover'd concerning it.

*Secondly*, As for those Truths which we contend to be still mysterious, we own, that they are not so in such a high Degree as they were before. The Trinity, for Instance, and the Incarnation were hid from, and wholly inconceivable to all Mankind before the Evangelical Revelation; but by that we have some Knowledge of them communicated to us, which makes them cease to be Mysteries, not wholly, but only in the same Degree that they were before. For since that Knowledge is imperfect, since God has not made a full and entire Discovery of those



those Truths, but only such a one as answers the End of it, the exalting our Minds and enlarging our Conceptions of him, in Order to the strengthening and establishing our Obedience, since the Manifestation, I say, of these Truths is not so adequate to the Objects of them; but that we must confess with St. Paul, that we *know but in Part, and see through a Glass darkly*; we must acknowledge, unless we pretend to a higher Illumination than this inspir'd Apostle himself did, that we can have but an imperfect and defective Knowledge of them, that there remains something in them, which we shall not discover while we are in these Tabernacles of Clay, something which cannot be known or understood by us, 'till God shall enlighten our Souls with a more full and adequate Manifestation of himself to them in Glory; which we ought with Patience, Humility, and Resignation of ourselves to his holy Will to fit and prepare ourselves for; and this is sufficient to give them the Denomination of Mysteries in the common Acceptation of the Word, as it denotes something which is known in Part, but has something in it which we cannot comprehend. And thus the Truth of my First Proposition stands firm, *That there are Evangelical Mysteries, or, certain Truths reveal'd by God in the Gospel, which are not within the Power of humane Reason, either to*

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discover at first, or comprehend now when they are revealed. I proceed now to prove the Second :

Secondly, That such Mysteries, or incomprehensible Truths, are nevertheless proper Matters of Faith, and require the highest Degree of Assent to them, upon the Authority of the Revealer.

If our Comprehension or full Understanding of them were made the Measure of the Truth and Possibility of Things ; so that tho' we have sufficient Evidence for the Being of any Thing, we shou'd suspend our Belief of it, 'till we cou'd comprehend and fully understand the Nature of it, we shou'd find Reason enough to doubt of many Things, of which we think we have an indubitable Certainty. For, as I have shewn you already, not only in the abstruser Effects of Nature, but in those that are more obvious, our Understandings are very short, and we can conceive but little of them : Now, if our Comprehension must not be made the Measure and Test of natural Truths, much less certainly ought it to be the Standard of those that are supernatural, which it is impossible, as has been shewn, that we shou'd ever have known at all, or in any higher Degree, than as God has been pleas'd to reveal and manifest them to us : And if not, if Things may be agreeable to the fix'd and eternal *Ideas* of Truth, not-with-



withstanding that that Agreement does not appear to our Understanding, to our shallow and finite Conceptions of them, then certainly whatsoever is plainly discover'd to us by the God of Truth himself; the Authority of that Testimony is sufficient to justify our Belief of it; it may be true, we must own it, because we are no competent Judges of the Possibility of Things; but God himself has said it, and therefore it must be true; tho' we do not perfectly understand or comprehend it.

But, say the *Socinians* and *Unitarians*, tho' it is no Argument why we shou'd disbelieve any Thing reveal'd to us, because we cannot comprehend it in the full Extent of its Nature, or the Mode and Manner of its Being; yet where we have no *Ideas* nor Apprehension of what is propos'd to us as the Object of our Belief, we cannot possibly believe it, because to believe a Thing of which we have no Notion or *Idea* is to believe we know not what, and this is the Foundation on which the *Scheme* of their New Christianity is built. For, when the receiv'd Doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation are propos'd to them, We have no Ideas, say they, of a God incarnate, or of the Divine Nature's subsisting entirely and indivisibly in Three distinct Persons, and therefore they cannot be the Objects of our Belief; and therefore because we cannot disown the Authority

thority of the Revelation, those Places of Scripture which in their natural and obvious Sense do plainly prove those Doctrines, must be understood in some remoter and allegorical Acceptation, such as will suit with the Notions and *Ideas* of our Minds; and thus instead of resolving the Reason of their Faith into the Truth and Veracity of God, they subvert the natural Order of Things, and measure God's Veracity by their own Reason.

Now, this being the Principle upon which these bold Disturbers of the Peace of the Church, think to justify their perverting and wresting the Scriptures from their natural and genuine Sense, to accommodate them, and make them suit with their *Hypothesis*, I shall consider it, and the Force and Strength of their Reasonings upon it, as plainly and as briefly as I can.

The Reason, they say, why we cannot believe this Proposition, is, That Jesus Christ was God and Man in the literal and proper Sense of the Words, is, because we have no *Idea* of it. Now, by *Idea* here, they must either mean an adequate *Idea*, such as includes a distinct Perception of the whole Nature of God and Man, and the Mode and Manner of their Union, and then their Meaning is, that they do not believe it, because they do not perfectly know or comprehend it; and if this be an  
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Argument for their Disbelief, they must, as I have already prov'd, upon the same Principle disbelieve their own Being, and every Thing besides: Or else, they must mean that they have no *Idea* or Notion of it at all, and this is manifestly false; because there is no Term in the Proposition but what is intelligible, we have an *Idea* of God and Man, and we have such an imperfect *Idea* of the Union of these Natures, as is sufficient to make us believe the Possibility of it, arising from the Perceptions we have of the Union that is between our own Souls and Bodies, which tho' it is not wholly of the same Nature with that which is between God and Man, in the Person of Jesus Christ, yet it is so far analogous to it, as to shew us the Possibility of it, and to give us an imperfect and inadequate *Idea* of it. And if this imperfect *Idea* or Notion we have of it, in Conjunction with the infallible Testimony of God, be not a sufficient Foundation for us to ground our Belief of it upon, we can have no Reason to believe any one of the infinite Attributes and Perfections of God, because, as has been shewn before, we cannot possibly form any perfect, *i. e.* adequate and commensurate *Idea* of any Thing that is infinite. Nay, I think I may add further, that if the Union of two such distinct Beings as Soul and Body in one Man were not the immediate Object of

of our Sensation and Perception, but had been a Truth only made known to us by Revelation, these Men wou'd have made as much Scruple and Difficulty to receive it, as they now do to receive the Doctrine of the Trinity or Incarnation, and their Arguments wou'd have had the same Force against it, that they have against the other. But Mens *Ideas* and Apprehensions are extrinsecal to the Truth of Things, and can no more alter the Nature of them, than, as I said before, stopping our Ears can still the Noise of Thunder, or shutting our Eyes can eclipse and darken the Radiancy of the Sun: Truths will be Truths, whether we apprehend them to be so, or no.

From what has been said I think it plainly appears, that this Pretence of the *Socinians* and *Unitarians*, that they cannot believe, for Example, This Proposition, that Jesus Christ was God and Man, in the natural Sense of the Words, because they have no *Idea* of it, is of no Force, because we have such an imperfect *Idea* of it, as, in Conjunction with the Testimony of God, is sufficient to ground our Belief of it upon, in the proper and genuine Signification of the Words, and consequently that so far there is no Reason, why they shou'd fly to a remote and allegorical Explication of them.

But granting this, that we cannot reasonably deny our Assent to any Thing reveal'd  
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by God barely because we have no *Ideas* or Apprehensions of it, or that imperfect *Idea* of it in Conjunction with the Testimony of God, may be a sufficient Foundation to build our Faith of it upon; yet suppose, say they, that what we do, or can conceive of it, be inconsistent with, and contradict the plain and evident Dictates of our Reason, which is as much the Will and Revelation of God, as the written Word itself? What must we do in this Case? Revelation tells us the Thing is so, and Reason, on the other Side, says it cannot be, and to give our Assent to, and believe both Parts of the Contradiction is impossible: Is it not then the most natural Way to put such a Sense upon the Revelation, as may make it consistent and reconcileable both with itself and those Dictates of natural Reason that God has imprinted in our Souls? As for Instance, the Scriptures and Reason both tell us, that there is but one God; and yet in the former we find the Name and *Essential* Attributes of God given to Three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and whatever has the Name and *Essential* Attributes of God must be God. Now, says Reason, the Ideas of Three and One are so different, that to affirm the One of the Other, *i. e.* to say, that Three are One, or, that One is Three, is a manifest Contradiction; and therefore, to make the Scripture consistent both with  
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itself and the natural Dictates of Reason; we understand those Scriptures that make the Son and Holy Ghost to be God, not in the proper and primary, but in a figurative and remote Sense of the Words, to avoid the Contradiction that a Trinity in Unity wou'd imply.

This is the Sum of what they object upon this Point, and in Answer to it; we must acknowledge that it is impossible for us to believe any Thing which implies in it an evident and manifest Contradiction to the plain Dictates of Reason; and 'tis no less impossible that any Thing reveal'd by the God of Truth, who is the Author both of Reason and Revelation, shou'd be so. But then have we not great Reason to believe, that the Inconsistence and Incompatibility that appears to us, is not in the Thing itself, but the Effect of the Shallowness of our Capacities, and Dulness of our Apprehensions, that will not suffer us to view Things in the full Extent of their Nature, and that consequently we may be mistaken, and take an eternal Truth for a real Contradiction, as we have Reason enough to believe they do in this Matter. That Three shou'd be One, and One Three in the same Sense, *i. e.* that Three shou'd be One in the same Respect in which they are Three; and that One shou'd be Three, in the same



Respect in which it is One; this indeed were a plain and evident Contradiction, for it would be in Effect to say, that Three were Three, and not Three; and One were One, and not One; which is impossible: But that One shou'd be Three and One in different Respects, implies no Contradiction at all; and this is all that we are taught to believe of the Holy and Ever-blessed Trinity, that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are Three in Respect of their distinct Personalities, and One in Respect of their Essence which is the same, whole, entire, and inseparable in them all. Tho' we cannot therefore comprehend the Manner of this Union and Distinction, as it is not possible we shou'd; since it does not contradict, tho' it surpasses our Reason, we have nothing to do to wrest the Scriptures from their proper and natural Sense by Sophistical Criticisms, according to our own Conceits and Fancies, which is the next Step to the rejecting their Authority, if not in Effect the same; or to expect Philosophical Explications of them, whereby we may lose ourselves, but can never hope to find out incomprehensible Truths. If we search the Scriptures, we shall find that these Things are so, that God who alone comprehends all Truth, has reveal'd them to us, and we have no more to do, but to adore that

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Mystery we cannot fathom, and to subject our Reason as well as our Affections to the Obedience of Faith. Men and Devils may argue against it, but all their Wit and Sophistry shall be no more conclusive with an honest humble minded Christian, than (as I said before) what a Man that never had his Sight can bring to prove that Snow is not white, or a Coal not black, since they want that Faculty which alone is proper to judge of possible Truths, and that is infinite Wisdom. He will rest in this Resolution, infinite Wisdom has reveal'd this to me, and it neither does, nor can contradict, tho' it surpasses my Reason, and therefore I will, and I have all the Reason in the World to believe it.

And thus I have endeavour'd to establish the Divine Authority of the Gospel, and to shew that there are Truths reveal'd therein by God, which are not within the Compass of humane Reason, either to discover at first, or comprehend now that they are reveal'd, and Lastly, that such Truths are, nevertheless, proper Objects of our Faith, and require the highest Degree of our Assent, tho' we cannot comprehend them. I come now in the Last Place,

Fourthly, To offer Two Things to your Consideration, which may help to stifle any Suggestions of Infidelity in our Minds.



First, Let us endeavour to get our Minds possess'd with a lively Sense of the infinite Perfections of the Divine Nature, the incomprehensible Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness, and Majesty of God, and our own Vileness and Imperfections. *Canst thou, (says Zophar, Job, iii. 7. By searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to Perfection? i. e. it is impossible thou should'st. Let thy Soul travail never so long in the Contemplation of his infinite Perfections, thou wilt still fall infinitely short of them. Whatever thou shalt be able to discover of them, will bear no Proportion to what will still remain unknown to thee. On the other Hand, let us reflect upon the Infirmities and Imperfections of our own Natures. We are, perhaps, the lowest Order of all those intellectual Beings, that God has created, and how large soever the Capacities and Comprehensions of superior Spirits may be, we are so far from being able to attain to an unbounded and universal Knowledge of Things, that in our highest Attainments, which we reach to by many slow and wearisome Advances, tedious Instructions, and long Experience, we must confess ourselves very short-sighted; the Prospect of what we think we know is very short, and what we do really know, far shorter. And this infinite Distance between God and Man duly weigh'd*

weigh'd and consider'd, it will not seem more absurd and ridiculous to suppose that a Herd of Deer, or a Flock of Sheep shou'd understand all the Intrigues of Court and Consults of Parliament, than to make our shallow Capacities the Test of all possible Truths, and thereupon to disbelieve any reveal'd Mystery, any Discovery that is made us of the Nature of God, because we cannot fully and perfectly understand or comprehend it.

*Secondly,* For our Comfort and Satisfaction let us consider, that those Things which we now see but through a Glass darkly, when a few Days more are pass'd over our Heads, when this Veil of our Flesh shall be drawn aside, and we are admitted into an immediate View of God in Glory, then they will appear more bright, more clear and evident to us, then shall we know even as we are known, and what is now in Part shall be done away. While our Souls are immur'd, as it were, within their fleshly Prisons, all that we can discover of the Spiritual World, is but like those imperfect Maps which the first Discoverers of Countries use to make, with Capes and Fore-lands taken at a Distance, but when those Prison-Doors are thrown open, and God shall take us to himself, when that stupendous and astonishing Scene of the Spiritual World shall discover itself to our disembody'd Souls, we shall



then have clearer and distincter Views of those Things that are now so intricate, and so far surpass our Understandings, and Faith shall end in Sight, we shall see the bright Side of many Things which now seem dark and unintelligible to us, and many of those Things which are now Mysteries, will then appear plain and easy Truths to us. But even in that happy State there will be Bounds set to our Knowledge, tho' of a far vaster Extent than what it is now confin'd to; for the Knowledge of the Extent of God's infinite Perfections, finite Spirits must never expect to attain to; for that wou'd subvert the Order of Nature, make God finite and comprehensible, and ourselves infinite. But, however, we shall know enough to make us eternally love, and adore, and magnify that inexhaustible Fountain of Perfections; and the more purify'd, the more refin'd our Spirits are from the Dross and Alloy of this World, the livelier and clearer Impressions shall they receive of the Supream Good both here and hereafter; the greater Communications shall they experience of his Love, and Grace, and Favour in this Life, and of Bliss and Glory in that which is to come. Let us therefore beseech Almighty God, whom without Faith it is impossible to please, to send his Holy Spirit into our Hearts, and to establish us in such a lively Faith of the Truths of his holy Religion, as may enable us

us to overcome the World, and conform us to the Image of his well-beloved Son in whom we believe; that so at last, when we have past the Waves of this troublesome World, we may arrive at the Harbour of our Hope, even the Salvation of our Souls, thro' the same Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*





S E R M O N XII.

*The Divine Original of Civil Authority, and the Measures of Submission due to it,*



ROM. xiii. 5.

*Wherefore ye must needs be subject; not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience-sake.*



**I**T is in Obedience to the Supream Authority of this Nation that we are here assembled together, to celebrate this Anniversary Fast; appointed to be observ'd both for a Testimony of a Publick National Abhorrence of *The Horrid and Execrable Murther, and Unparallel'd Treason* of this Day, committed against the Person and Life of that Excellent Prince King **CHARLES** the First, of Ever-blessed and Glorious Memory; and also humbly *To implore the Mercy of God, that*

the Guilt of his innocent Blood may not be laid to the Charge of the People of this Land, or at any Time hereafter be visited upon us, or our Posterity. It is upon this Occasion, and for these Ends and Purposes, that we are now met together: And conformable thereunto are the Prayers and Supplications which we have been offering up to the Divine Majesty. And, if we have not been all the while basely prevaricating and playing the Hypocrites with God Almighty, we must be deeply sensible of the Heinousness of that Sin, the Subject of our present Humiliation. We are often told, indeed, of a Set of Miscreants in the World, who, in Contempt of the Laws both of God and Man, turn this Day, a Day of Trouble, Reproach, and Blasphe-my, into a Day of Brutal Mirth and Festivity; inhumanly insulting the Ashes of that Pious Prince, making a Sport of, and glorying in that Barbarous Action, whereby (to speak in the Language of our Legislature) *The most insupportable Shame and Infamy was brought upon the People of this Land.* But the enjoyning and observing this Anniversary Solemnity, for a Mournful and Penitential Commemoration of it, shews what the true Sense of the Nation both has been, and still is, of it: That It considers it as a Sin of the highest Nature, odious, and abominable in the Sight of God and Men. And so long as we find it branded in the  
Body



Body of our Laws with the Characters of an *Horrid, Execrable, and Detestable Murder, an Impious Fact, an Unparallel'd Treason*; so long as that Mock-Court of Justice, which decreed it, is there adjudg'd to have been *A Traiterous Assembly, a prodigious, un-heard of Tribunal*; so long as the Persons engaged in those Wicked Designs, are represented as *A Parcel of Desperately Wicked Wretches, hardened in their Impiety, and the Principles they went upon, as inconsistent with the undoubted and fundamental Laws of this Kingdom*; so long, I say, as our Laws, the most Authentick Evidences, both of the Sense of the Nation, and of the Nature of our Constitution, speak this Language, so long every honest Man and good Subject, must think with Horror of such Abominable Outrages done to the Happy Constitution he lives under; and bear his Testimony against the insufferable Insolence of such Wretches, and the Treason of this Day.

The Words which I have made Choice of for the Entertainment of your Meditations at this Time, are a Reinforcement of the Conclusion which *St. Paul* had before drawn from some Principles laid down in the four preceding Verses, relating chiefly to these Two Points of Doctrine touching Civil Government:

First, *Whence it is that the Higher Powers derive their Authority,*

Secondly,

Secondly, *What are the Measures of Obedience and Submission due to them.*

I shall speak, as clearly as I can, to each of them, and conclude with some Application suitable to the Occasion.

*First,* Let us consider the Account which the Apostle there gives of the Source or Fountain, from whence the Higher Powers, [stiled Rulers, Ver. 3. *The Ministers of God, Revengers to execute Wrath, Ver. 4.*] i. e. the Supream Magistrates, or Governours in all Political Societies, derive their Authority, or Right to govern: And this, he says, they do from God: *For there is no Power but of God; the Powers that be are ordain'd of God.* Whatever the Form or Model of their Government be, whether the Supream Authority be in one Single Person, as in Monarchies, or in a certain select Number, as in Aristocracies; or in the Diffusive Body of the Society, as in Democracies; that Political Power and Authority is from God; and those to whom the Exercise of it, and the Administration of the Government is committed, are to be consider'd, regarded, and submitted to as God's Ordinance, acting as his Deputies and Vicegerents, set up, authoriz'd, and commission'd by him, and accountable to him as their Supream Lord, for their Good or Ill-Administration. God Almighty is Natural Lord of all Things, the Supream Monarch of the World, *King of Kings;*



*Kings, and Lord of Lords; and all the several Kingdoms and States in it are but so many appendant Provinces appertaining to his Universal Empire, wherein he substitutes Princes and Magistrates to minister under him, cloath'd with a Portion of his own Sovereign Power and Authority, delegated to them for that Purpose, to preserve Peace and good Order in the World. And this he does not merely by the Permission, but by the Direction and Appointment, of his governing Providence. It is his Will that there shou'd be Government and Governours among Men: It is the Way that he has provided, and accordingly actually takes for promoting the Welfare and Happiness of humane Societies. There is no Point of Doctrine deliver'd in more plain and expresse Terms in the Holy Scripture than this. *The Kingdom is the Lord's*, says David, Psal. 22. 28. *and he is the Governour among the Nations.* Psal. 82. 1. *He standeth in the Congregation of the Mighty; he judgeth among the Gods.* Promotion, or Exaltation to Power and Authority, cometh neither from the East, nor from the West, nor from the South. Psalm 75. 6. [*i. e.* from the Positions, or Aspects, or Influence of the Planets, or from the Rising, or Setting, or Exaltation of the Sun, as the Eastern Nations, much addicted to Astrology, were apt to imagine,] but from God, whose Habitation or Symbolical Presence*

sence was in the Tabernacle then plac'd on Mount Sion, on the North-side of Jerusalem: Ver. 7. For he is the Judge, he putteth down one, and setteth up another. He removeth Kings, says the Prophet Daniel, 2. 21. and setteth up Kings, and tells Nebuchadnezzar, Chap. 4. 17. That the Most High ruleth in the Kingdom of Men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will: And 2. 27. That it was the God of Heaven who had given him a Kingdom, and Power, and Strength, and Glory. And Cyrus makes the same Acknowledgment as to himself: Ez. 1. 2. The Lord God of Heaven hath given me all the Kingdoms of the Earth. And this God does judicially, suiting the Kings he sets up to the Merits or Demerits of a People. 1 Kings 10. 9. Because God loved Israel for ever, therefore he made Solomon King to do Judgment and Justice. And on the other Hand, I gave thee a King in mine Anger, and took him away in my Wrath, saith the Lord by the Mouth of his Prophet, Hosea, 13. 11. evidencing his Displeasure in taking away a King, as well as his Anger in giving him; according to what the same Prophet speaks in another Place, 10. 3. We have no King, because we fear'd not the Lord. We have many Instances of this Divine Interposition in the Promotion, Appointment and authorizing of even the worst of Princes and Governours. It was the God of Israel, 1 Kings



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11. 31. 12. 15. *who rent the Kingdom from Rehoboam, and gave Ten of the Tribes to Jeroboam. And the Lord is said, 1 Kings 16. 2. to have exalted Baasha out of the Dust, and to have made him a Prince over his People Israel.* And when our Blessed Saviour stood before Pilate, he did not disown the Power and Authority he assum'd to himself, of condemning or releasing him: But acknowledg'd, that it was given him from Above; immediately indeed from the Emperour, but originally from God himself; *By whom Kings reign, and Princes decree Justice, by whom Princes rule, and Nobles, even all the Judges of the Earth. Prov. 18. 15, 16.* And in the Passage before us, (tho' the Doctrine is not to be limited to any one, but extends to all Governours, yet) the Apostle, we may well conclude, when he was addressing himself particularly to the Romans, had a more immediate Eye to the then Roman Emperour, *Claudius* or *Nero*, who were both of them the worst of Men, and the cruellest of Tyrants: And yet even these were ordain'd of God, and their Government to be submitted to, as his Ordinance, not only for Fear of Wrath or temporal Punishment, that they might inflict upon the Disobedient, but out of Conscience of their Duty to God. They were the Higher Powers; and the Authority by which they acted, whatever ill Tincture it might take from the

the Lusts and Passions of those corrupt Conduits thro' which it was convey'd, sprung nevertheless from God the Fountain of all Power, and was to be reverenc'd and submitted to *for the Lord's Sake*, however perverted and misapply'd; even when employ'd for the *Terror of good Works*, and the *Encouragement of the Evil*, in Contradiction to the original Design of the Institution of Government.

Thus, I think, the Scriptures sufficiently shew, that Government is of Divine Original, and that the Higher Powers derive their Authority and Right to govern from God. And they that wou'd exclude him from having any further Concern in this Matter, than barely permitting Men by his Providence to do what they themselves think fit, making all Civil Authority and Power the original Result of the free Act and Deed of the People, transferring it to such Rulers and Governours as they by common Consent thought fit to set over them, and upon such Terms and Conditions as were mutually agreed to both by the Givers and Receivers; they, I say, who wou'd derive all Power from the People (besides these express Authorities of the Holy Scriptures) find many other Difficulties lie cross the Way of that Opinion, which they never have been, nor ever will be able to get over. For, supposing such an independant State, as this No-  
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tion is built upon, when Mankind were absolutely free from all Ties of Civil Subjection and Government, which can never be prov'd; yet, where was the Right to Government then? Was it in the People themselves? This is not consistent with their Hypothesis; supposes a Right which was not then created, but sprang from subsequent Consent. And how cou'd they transfer to others what they had not themselves, what, they suppose, was not then in being? And, besides, how came the Supream Civil Magistrate by that principal Branch of his Sovereignty, the Power of the Sword, a Power over the Lives of his Subjects? They will say, I know, from the People; who, in giving up to the Magistrate, every Man for himself, his Natural Right to defend his Life against any that shou'd attempt to take it away by Violence, did thereby veruallly give him a Power of Life and Death. But,

*First*, If that Self-Defence was a personal Right, which God and Nature had given him, the Defenders of this Opinion must be oblig'd to prove, that he had Power to make it over to another, to dispose of, and part with it at Pleasure, which they can never do. And therefore the Magistrate must derive this Power of Capital Punishments from some Higher Authority. Besides, *2dly*, If they cou'd transfer and make it over to the

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the Magistrate, yet how does it appear that they have done it? For, 1<sup>st</sup>, The Power which the Magistrate claims in such Cases is *to execute Vengeance on those that do Evil*, not only against himself but others; and therefore is of a different Nature from, and more extensive than that Self-Defence which they are suppos'd to have made over to him. And then, 2<sup>dly</sup>, Has not every Man still the same Right that ever God and Nature gave him to defend himself? *i. e.* to kill another, when he has no other Way to preserve his own Life from unjust and inauthoritative Violence? And how then can the Magistrate derive his Power from those, who either never had it themselves, or if they had it, had no Right to make it over to another, any more than a mere Usufructuary can dispose of, or transfer what he possesses; without the Consent and Authority of his Lord; or if they had it, and cou'd have parted with it, yet it is plain they have not done it, the natural Right to Self-Defence still remaining as it was, under whatever Government they live. From whence, I think, we may safely conclude, that Government is of Divine Extraction, and that the Supream Magistrate derives his Authority not from the People, but from God.

But now, tho' the Higher Powers, the Supream Magistrates, or Governors in States  
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and Kingdoms, are the Ordinance of God, set up, commission'd, and authoriz'd by him, and act as his Deputies and Vicegerents in their respective Dominions, yet for the right Understanding of this Matter, and preventing some popular Mistakes about it, there are several Things that ought to be well consider'd, in Order to give us a true Notion of it. And,

*First*, It is to be observ'd, that tho' the Magistracy and Government, in Respect of the Sovereign Power and Authority deriv'd upon it from God, is God's Ordinance; yet the Specification of it, or the digesting, or modelling of it into this or that particular Form, is the Effect of humane Prudence: Except where God himself has immediately interpos'd and interested himself; as in the Case of the *Jews*, in settling Kingly Government among them at their own Request. *1 Sam. 8.* Otherwise, we may suppose he left Men to themselves to proceed in that Affair, as natural Wisdom and the Apprehensions they had of the Expediency or Advantages of one Form of Government above another, shou'd direct. For, God has nowhere, either by Command or Counsel, precisely limited them to any particular *Plan*, Monarchy, Aristocracy, or Democracy: But what is by mutual and common Consent agreed upon, that he animates and gives Life to,

to, and stamps his own Divine Authority upon it; vesting with Sovereign Power that Single Person, or select Number, or diffusive Body of the Society, according to the Scheme or Form of their Constitution; whereby He or They become his Vicegerents, and rule and govern in his Name or Stead. Now that which is the Work of humane Prudence only, the Act of Man, cannot be said to be of Divine Institution: We cannot carry the Stream higher than the Fountain itself from whence it flows. And therefore, tho' every Government, in Respect of the Power and Authority it receives from Above, is the Ordinance of God; yet, in Respect of its Form, or the Disposition, or placing of that Power in such, or such a Way, in one or more, 'tis the Creature, the Ordinance of Man, the original Effect of, and still subject to humane Appointments.

*Secondly,* It is to be observ'd, that God's communicating Sovereign Power to Magistracy or Government, does not ordinarily extend to a formal Designation, or Pointing out of the particular Persons in whom it is to reside. Indeed, while the Patriarchal or Family-Government continued (which is the only Form of Government, which we have any Intimation of 'till after the Flood, and which continued in the Family of *Abraham*, 'till *Jacob* and his Descendants went down



into *Egypt*, and became Subjects to the King of that Country); while that Sort of Government, I say, continued, those Governors may well be said to have had their immediate personal Designation and Appointment, virtually at least, from God; inasmuch as their Title and Right to govern (founded in a natural Superiority) was an Appendage and Incident to their Primogeniture, which was owing to God only. But after this, when Necessity forc'd Mankind, for their greater Security against the Violence and Insults of troublesome Neighbours, to form themselves into larger Societies, under the Rule and Protection of Civil Governors, as the common Political Fathers of so many united Families, we do not find (except in his own peculiar People, as in the Case of *Saul* and *David*, and some of the Kings of *Israel*, after the Revolt of the Ten Tribes) that God was ever pleas'd to interpose any further in appropriating and affixing Government to particular Persons or Families, than by directing and influencing by his Providence the either formal or virtual Choice and Approbation of Persons made by such Societies themselves. God does not, I say, by any express Command or particular Direction ordinarily point out the very Persons in whom the Government shall reside; but leaves this to humane Prudence and Choice. And when  
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that Choice is made, he ratifies, confirms, and establishes it, and vests the Person so agreed upon with a Portion of his own Sovereign Power and Authority, and a Commission to exercise it; and so his Government becomes God's Ordinance. Though Kings therefore are justly said to derive their Royal Power and Authority from God only, yet nevertheless they may no less truly be said to have receiv'd their Capacity and Qualification for receiving that Power and Authority from God, from the Choice and Approbation of those over whom he makes them Rulers or Governors; either immediately and in themselves, as in Elective Kingdoms; or originally and radically in the Persons of those from whom they derive their Right of Succession, as in Governments Hereditary. And though this shou'd be an Inducement to Princes to have a tender Regard for the Welfare of their People, yet 'tis no Impeachment nor weakening of their Power, or lessening the Authority of God's Ordinance in them.

*Thirdly,* But let it be observ'd further in the Third and Last Place, That though all Sovereign Princes have their Power from God, and from him only, yet not all in the same Extent and Degree: God Almighty accommodating and proportioning the Power he communicates to them, to the Nature



and Tenure of their several respective Constitutions. If the Government is in its fundamental Constitution Absolute, the Power that Prince receives from God is Absolute too; all Things are left to his Arbitrary Will and Pleasure. But where the Government is of a limited Nature, God cannot be conceiv'd to give that Prince any more than a limited Power, qualified with such Restrictions and Limitations, as have risen, either from original Reserves and Stipulations made in the first Formation of that Government, or from such free and gracious Concessions of Princes in Abatement of their former Power, as have pass'd into, and become fundamental and essential Parts of the Constitution. In the Roman State at the Time when St. Paul wrote this Epistle, that Sovereign Power which had been so ambulatory among them (sometimes in their Kings, sometimes in their Consuls, sometimes in their Consuls and Senate, sometimes in their Dictators, and sometimes in their Tribunes of the People) was then vested in their Emperors, in such an ample and extensive Manner, that, as *Justinian* says, *Quod Principi placuit, Legis habet vigorem*, The Will and Pleasure of the Prince had the Force of a Law: The People, by the *Lex Regia*, having submitted themselves to their Government absolutely, and without Reserve. This was the Nature and Constitu-

*Inst. Lib. 1.  
Tit. 2. de  
Jure Nat.  
Ec.*

stitution of that Government, and the Power deriv'd from God upon their Princes was coextensive and commensurate with it. Which, by the Way, must needs be allow'd to take off somewhat of the Force of the Arguments drawn from the Example of the Manner of Subjects under such Absolute Governments, when they are applied to those who live under Legal and Limited Princes. For, if God's Commission, as has been said, and the Power and Authority convey'd by it to Princes, extends as far as the Legal Constitution of every particular Government and no further; it does not seem necessarily, and *eo nomine* to follow, if Oppression, and Tyranny, and Persecution are patiently and without Murmuring to be submitted to in Princes Absolute and Unlimited, that therefore the same cruel and unmerciful Usage is with equal Submission and Patience to be born with from Legal and Limited Princes, confin'd to exercise their Power only in Conformity to the Laws which the People themselves have tacitly or expressly consented to. The former in such Cases, tho' they betray their Trust and wretchedly abuse their Power, yet they act consistently with the Constitution; they do not exceed the Bounds, tho' they act contrary to the Intent and Design of their Commission. And therefore their most Tyrannical Acts (like an unjust Sentence given



by a corrupt Judge in the Execution of, and pursuant to a Legal Commission) bind the Consciences of their Subjects to Obedience and Submission, as being within the Extent of that Power and Authority, which God and the Constitution of the State have invested them with. But that the Tyrannical Exorbitancies of Legal and Limited Princes, where the Establish'd Laws of their Country, and not their own mere Will and Pleasure, are the stated Rule and Measure of their Power and the Subjects Duty, lay the same Obligation upon the Consciences of their Subjects, cannot, I conceive, in Reason be averr'd, especially when they manifestly tend to a total Ruin and Subversion of the whole Government and the publick Safety. In all such Cases, indeed, they are secure in their own Persons from all violent and forcible Resistance, having no Superiour Power on Earth to controul them. But that the same Deference and Subjection shou'd be paid to the Instruments of their Tyranny in the Execution of an inauthoritative Power, not only not supported by, but inconsistent with the very Being of the Constitution, there is not the same Reason to expect.

And thus I have consider'd the first Point of Doctrine I propos'd to speak to, touching the Original of Government, I have shewn, that the Higher Powers, or the Supream Magis-

gistrates or Rulers in all Political Societies, of what Denomination soever they be, derive their Authority and Right to govern from God only, they are set up by him, and act by his Commission, as his Deputies and Vicegerents, and are accountable only to him as their Supream Lord for the Administration of that Power which he has committed unto them: But nevertheless that the Specification of Government, or the Disposition or placing of that Sovereign Power derived from God in such or such a Way, in one or more; as likewise the Designation or pointing out of the particular Persons or Families, in whom that Power is to reside, are ordinarily left to humane Prudence and Choice, under the Influence and Assistance of Divine Providence; God Almighty vertuating, confirming, and establishing such humane Determinations, and making them irrevocable by his own Authority: And lastly, That Princes receive from God such a Measure of Power as is suitable to, coextensive, and commensurate with the fundamental Constitutions of their several respective Governments, and no more; Absolute Power, where the Government is in its Constitution absolute, and a limited Power, where the Government is fundamentally so; I come now to consider,

*Secondly,* The Inference that the Apostle makes from this Doctrine, viz. That since  
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Government is God's Ordinance, and the Supream Magistrates in all Political Societies derive their Power and Authority from God, because *there is no Power but from him, The Powers that be are ordain'd of God*, therefore every Soul must be subject to the Higher Powers, must not resist them, but submit to them as God's Ordinance upon Pain of Damnation, not only for *Wrath*, or Fear of the temporal Punishments which they may inflict, but for *Conscience-Sake*, or out of a Sense of our Duty to God.

Now, to give the best Light I can to this Subject (dark indeed in itself, but made more so by the passionate and unhappy Disputes that have risen of late about it) I shall digest what I have to say upon it into these Four following, I think, plain Propositions, and then draw to a Conclusion, having first premis'd the known Distinction of a two-fold Obedience, *Active*, where we can comply with the Thing commanded without offending God, and *Passive*, or a patient Submission to the Penalties where we cannot Act.

*First*, I take it for granted, That no Power on Earth has any Authority to oblige Mankind to an Active Compliance with what is, or appears to the Conscience to be inconsistent with, or contradictory to the known Laws of God; because they are under a prior and superior Obligation to obey God

God in all Things, which no inferior earthly Authority can supersede. To tie Men to any Act of Disobedience to the Will of God, is to tie them in Effect, and in a Moral Sense, to an Impossibility, which comes not within the Compass of any Law. And therefore when any such Case happens, the Resolution is easy, we must obey God rather than Man, let the Consequences be what they will; only Care must be taken, that in refusing to pay this positive or active Obedience to the sinful Commands of the Superior Powers, we use all proper Means to get our Judgments rightly inform'd of the Nature of the Things commanded. And that after such due Information had, the Sinfulness of it appears as evident and certain to us, as that it is our Duty to obey him in Things not sinful; and Lastly, That we meekly and patiently submit to the Penalty of not complying impos'd by competent Authority, such as by God's Ordinance have a just Right either to our Active or Passive Obedience.

*Secondly*, I take it for granted, That all Governments whatever, and however constituted, are vested by God with a Power and Authority that is not to be resisted, but submitted to by all their Subjects, either actively or passively. Because without this, they cou'd never answer the Ends of their Institution.



tution. Publick Peace and Order cou'd not be preserv'd, nor Laws executed, nor Differences and Controversies determin'd; all wou'd be precarious, and at the Mercy of every turbulent and discontented Traytor, unless there were some over-ruling and paramount Power and Authority lodged somewhere or other, in whose Determinations all shou'd be oblig'd finally to acquiesce; and whose Commands and Injunctions (if consistent with the Laws of God) all shou'd actively comply with or submit to the Penalties where they cou'd not, expecting the Reward of their Sufferings in a better World. No Man, I think, can deny this, without contradicting at the same Time the common Sense and Experience of Mankind, and calling in Question the Wisdom of all the Nations in the World; there being no Government on Earth where this is not the Case; where such an irresistible Power as this is not only a Part, but the very Life and Soul of the Constitution. This is what the freest State assumes to itself, as well as the most Absolute Monarch that ever was in the World, and without which it is impossible that any Government cou'd long subsist. But to know where it is lodged, or how it is circumstantiated, Recourse must be had to the particular Forms and Constitutions of several Countries.

*Thirdly,*

*Thirdly,* In Governments Monarchical, where the Sovereign Power resides in single Persons, the Measures of Active Obedience due to their Commands and Injunctions are not always the same, but proportionable to the Power and Authority communicated to them by God, as that is proportion'd (as I observ'd before) to the fundamental Laws and different Forms and Constitutions of their respective Governments. For in absolute Monarchies, to disobey or refuse to comply with any lawful Command of the Prince, is to disobey God's Ordinance, and virtually, and consequentially God himself in the Person of his Vicegerent, acting in such a Case within the Bounds of his Commission, and according to the Laws of such a Constitution; But in legal Monarchies (such as this that we have the Happiness, if we understood it, to live under) where the Prince is limited in the Exercise of his Sovereign Power by the Laws of the Constitution, this does not always hold, except when his Commands are conformable, at least not repugnant to the Laws of the Land, as well as consistent with the Laws of God. For, the Arbitrary Commands of Sovereigns so limited, being without the Bounds of their Commission, and therefore carrying nothing of any Power and Authority from God along with them to re-



recommend them to the Consciences of their Subjects, and enforce their Obedience, a Negative Resistance of, a Withstanding or not Complying with them, (especially if prejudicial to the Publick) cannot be reputed a Resisting the Ordinance of God. It is then only that they become binding to the Consciences of Subjects, when they come accompanied with the Assent and Consent of the People themselves in the Constitutional Way, or are agreeable to the settled Rules and Laws of the Constitution. Then indeed they are equivalent to the Edicts and Constitutions of the most Absolute and Unlimited Powers on Earth, and we are to submit to them for the Lord's Sake.

*Fourthly,* Though this Negative Resistance, or not complying with the Arbitrary Illegal Commands of our Sovereign limited as aforesaid, be consistent with all the Obligations to Duty and Obedience that the Laws either of God or Man lay upon us; yet positive Resistance, *i. e.* for their Subjects to take up Arms against them, to arraign, condemn, depose, or murder them, for any real or pretended Encroachments upon their Rights or Privileges; this is notoriously what the fundamental Laws of our Constitution declare to be most highly Criminal, and have most strictly

ly guarded against, and consequently is a contravening, resisting, and trampling upon the Ordinance of God himself; and they that so resist shall receive to themselves Damnation.

For, pray consider: Is not this Realm defin'd by Parliament to be an *Empire* go-24 Hen. 8. *vern'd by a Supream Head, to whom the* C. 12. *whole Body Politick, compact of all Sorts and Degrees of People, owe a natural and humble Obedience?* Is not all Civil Power own'd to be originally and radically in our Princes? And is there any Authority or Jurisdiction which is not derived from them? Is it not Treason to *imagine or compass* 25 Ed. 3. *their Death?* Has not the asserting that C. 11. *their Leiges, in Case of their not demeaning themselves in their Government by Reason, might remove them per Aspertee,* *The Case of the Spencers,* 14 Ed. 2. Stat. Hugonis. *has not this, I say, been adjudg'd in Parliament to be a Crime deserving perpetual Banishment?* Has it not been expressly declar'd, and never yet contradicted by the Legislature, and the Testification of the Truth thereof bound upon the Consciences of their Subjects by the Sacred Solemnities of Oaths, (though not now required) that they are *the Only Supream Governors of this Realm, and all other their Dominions and Countries:* I Eliz. 1. *And that it* 14 Car. 2. *is not Lawful to take up Arms against them*  
upon



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upon any Pretence whatsoever? And has not  
13 and 14 the same Authority Declared, That the Sole  
Car. 2. c. 3. and Supream Power of the Militia; and of  
all Forces by Sea and Land, and of all Forts  
and Places of Strength, is, and ever was  
their Undoubted Right; that both; or either  
of the Houses of Parliament cannot pretend to  
the same, or Lawfully Raise, or Levy any  
War Offensive or Defensive against them. And  
12 Car. 2. that by the Undoubted and Fundamental Laws  
c. 30. of this Kingdom, neither the Peers of this  
Realm, nor the Commons, nor both together  
in Parliament, or out of Parliament, nor the  
People Collectively or Representatively, ever  
had, or have, or ought to have any Coercive  
Power over their Persons?

Now, if the National Constitution is to  
be consider'd, as an Authentick Transcript  
or Exemplification of God's Ordinance, of  
what he has appointed to be the Rule and  
Measure of our Obedience to those whom  
he hath set over us; and if these and such  
like plain and Authoritative Declarations  
of the Laws give us a true Notion of what  
our Legal Constitution is; then certainly  
all positive forcible Resistance of the Per-  
sons of our Princes, and particularly, that  
Horrid Rebellion which was begun and  
carried on by Wicked Men, Sons of Be-  
lial, even to the Fatal Catastrophe of this  
Day's Tragedy, the imbruing their Hands  
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in the Blood of God's Anointed, must ever stand condemn'd in the Hearts and Opinions of all wise and good Men; of all that have any distinguishing Sense of Right and Wrong; all that have any Regard either for God's Honour, or their Country's Good. That there were some just Occasions of Complaint given in the Beginning of that Unfortunate Prince's Administration, by stretching the Prerogative of the Crown, in a few Instances, beyond its proper Bounds; the Extent of the Legal Constitution, is what no Lover of Truth will deny, and what it did not misbecome the Wisdom of a Parliament to discountenance, and put a Stop to. But how easily all that might have been rectify'd by a dutiful and well-temper'd Application, his Readiness to redress all Grievances, as soon as ever he became sensible of the Truth and Reality of them, plainly shews. How often might all those unhappy Differences have been compos'd, had not their own Obstinacy, industriously kept up and inflam'd by a few ambitious, self-ended, turbulent Spirits, fatally prevented it! But all his Royal Condescensions, instead of melting them into a better and more compliant Temper, serv'd only to harden them the more in their Wicked Designs; and make them more Insolent in their Demands; 'till at last they came to insist upon Terms of Ac-



commodation, much like those which *Naash* made to the Men of *Jabesh-Gilead*; that he shou'd, as it were, put out his own Eyes; submit his own Reason and Conscience to their Arbitrary Will and Pleasure, belye his own Heart, condemn his Innocence, and justify their Rebellion against him; and consent to a Total Subversion both of Church and State; which both *Vinculo Officii*, in Vertue of his Office, as King, and *Vinculo Juramenti*, by the Tie of God's Oath, upon him, as a Christian, he was bound to preserve, and maintain to the utmost of his Power. But nothing but his Blood wou'd satisfy them: That they inhumanly thirsted after, and that they had, to the Dishonour of God, the Disgrace of Religion, and the Reproach and Infamy of this Nation. The Guilt whereof cries loud for our deepest Humiliation, to deprecate those Judgments of God which such an unnatural *Parricide* may justly bring upon a Sinful People, even to distant Generations. And may the Consideration of the Blood and Confusion, and all those Dismal Consequences that attended this Nation's never to be enough lamented Defection from their Duty to that Blessed Prince, make us aware of falling under the same Delusion, or imbibing those Destructive Principles, which once introduc'd, carry'd on, and perfected the Ruin of the Best of Governments, and the Purest of Churches. For, Error is fruit-

fruitful, and one Ill Principle once espous'd may prove productive of a great many more. The Provision which the plain Direction of our Laws, which the Oaths of *Allegiance and Supremacy*, nay, even that precious Mark of Disloyalty, the *Solemn League and Covenant* itself, had made for the Safety of the King's Person, would (one wou'd think) have been such a Fence, as the Consciences of Men, and of Men pretending to be so much under the Power and Influence of Religion, cou'd hardly ever have broke thro'. But that one mistaken Notion of the Prince's deriving his Power not from God, but from the meer Free Gift of the People, which they were made to believe, they might revoke at Pleasure, carry'd them, by little and little, over all Difficulties, and reconcil'd all Contradictions. Their insisting upon a Coordination of Power with their Sovereign (though it was an odd Scheme of Government, A Monarch without Subjects, and Subjects without a Superior) was but a modest Improvement of that Principle. It was in a little Time carry'd much further, even to the claiming a Paramount Super-Supreme Power and Authority over their *Only Supream Governor*, and a Right to Coerce, to Levy War against him, to Imprison him, to Sit in Judgment upon him, to Condemn, and Execute him as a Traytor to the Majesty of his no longer Fellow-Sovereigns, but Liege-

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Lords, the People : An Instance of such Heroic Diabolical Wickedness, as, consider'd in all its Circumstances, all the Histories of past Ages cannot parallel. And as it never had a Precedent in former Times, so I hope in God it will never be made one to succeeding Generations. Let us be careful then how we entertain any Notions touching the Measures of the Prince's Power and our own Obedience and Submission, but such as will bear the proper Test, the Rule of God's Word and the Laws of the Land. And they that form their Judgments, regulate their Opinions, and direct, and govern their Actions by that Rule, will be both the Faithfullest Subjects and Truest Patriots; will never be drawn in, either to disquiet the Government of good Princes, or by any Illegal Compliances, concur in Sacrificing the Liberty of their Country to the Arbitrary Lusts and Passions of bad Ones. They will be too sensible of the Happiness they enjoy under the Best of Governments, and the Best of Princes, whom God in great Mercy has rais'd to inherit the Throne of Her Ancestors, either to entertain themselves, or encourage and countenance in others, any such Seditious Principles, as may interrupt the Peace and Tranquility of Her Reign, or obstruct those Good Designs which God has put into Her Heart, for the promoting His Glory, and the Welfare and Happiness

*and the Measures of Submission due to it. 341*

ness of Her People. They will make it the Subject of their Daily Prayers to God, That he wou'd preserve Her Person, direct Her Councils, prosper Her Arms, and establish Her Government, and be unto Her a strong Tower of Defence, and an Helmet of Salvation against the Face of all Her Enemies; that She may have a Long, Prosperous, and Glorious Reign over a Loving and Obedient People here, and at last, receive the Reward of Her Vertues in a Better World, in that Kingdom which cannot be shaken.  
*Amen.*





## SERMON XIII.

**A Profession void of the Practice of Christianity, cannot give us any Hopes of Salvation.**



MATTH. vii. 20, 21.

*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.*



**I**N this and the Two preceding Chapters, we have our Blessed Saviour discharging his Prophetical Office, in giving a *Digest*, or Body of Laws and Precepts for the Direction and Instruction of all such as shou'd take upon them the Profession of his Holy Religion. For, as He, the Eternal Son of God, had, in former Times, deliver'd the *Jewish Law*

to *Moses* in Mount *Sinai*, for the Instruction and Government of that People, as an Illustration and Improvement of the Law of Nature, which all Mankind had receiv'd written by the Finger of God upon the Tables of their Hearts, but had strangely defac'd thro' the false Glosses they had put upon it; so we have here the same Divine Person, the Blessed *Jesus*, having now taken upon him our Nature, in Order to the accomplishing the great Work of the Redemption and Salvation of Mankind, sitting upon the Mount, c. 5. 1. and delivering to his Disciples, and by them to all that shou'd be admitted into that Spiritual Kingdom which he came to erect and establish in the World, a more perfect System of Laws for the Guidance and Well-governing of his Church, and every particular Member of it; being a further Improvement of the Natural and Moral Law, and a clearing of them from all the False and Erroneous Interpretations, that thro' the Degeneracy of Mankind, had been put upon them. In this Divine Sermon, we see the True *Genius* and Spirit of Christianity; the high and exalted Morality that is requir'd of all its Professors. Here we are taught, that we are not only to forbear revenging ourselves upon those that have done us an Injury, but to love their Persons, to do Good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use us, and persecute us: And



*Profession void of the Practice of Christianity,*

If we are angry with any of our Brethren upon any slight Occasion, we are prohibited, under the severest Penalties, from giving Way to it, or letting it break out into any provoking, scornful, or virulent Speech against him. And if we have done any Injury to our Neighbour ourselves, we are commanded to *leave our Gift before the Altar*, not to appear before God in our Religious Assemblies, to offer up our Sacrifices of Prayers and Praises to his Holy Name, 'till we have endeavour'd, at least, to obtain his Pardon, and wrought our Reconciliation with him. Here inward Purity of the Heart is as indispensably required of us, as the outward Conformity of our Actions; and we learn, that a Man may be guilty of Adultery and Unclean-ness, by his entertaining and indulging unchaste and lascivious Desires in his Heart, though he never have any Opportunity to effect them. In a Word, the End and Design of our Lord's Coming, being, as he says, Chap. 5. Ver. 17. *Not to destroy the Law and the Prophets*, not to abrogate any one Moral Command, or to free Men in any Instance from the Obligation of any Duty towards God or Man, that was required either by the Law of Nature, or the Moral Part of the *Jewish* Law, but to *fulfill* them, to review and reform the Religion of the former Age, the Exter-  
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nal Body of the Mosaical Constitutions, to introduce that Substance of Religion, of which they gave but imperfect Types and Shadows, to explain what was before obscure, and set it in its true Light, and to add New Precepts of Morality where they were defective. So here we find him accordingly, giving Life to the Face of Religion, of which the *Jews* had but the first Draught, as it were, and that much sully'd and obscur'd by the false Glosses and Interpretations they had put upon many of the Precepts that it taught them, and giving some new Features and Lineaments where the first Design was defective. And, as the Laws and Precepts of the Gospel are more perfect than the Mosaical Ordinances, so our Obedience must be proportionable, *Except our Righteousness exceed the Righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees*, the strictest Observers of the *Jewish* Law, as far as the Gospel exceeds, is more perfect and compleat than it, *We shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*: The End for which he came into the World, and for which he made a more explicite, a more full and perfect Manifestation of the Will of God to Mankind, being to bring us nearer to himself, to a nearer Resemblance of, and Conformity with the Divine Perfections, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and



and purify to himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works. Tit. 2. 14. And that denying all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we might live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present World, looking for that Blessed Hope and the glorious Appearance of the Great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, Ver. 12, 13. And unless the Gospel have this Effect upon us, unless it serve to exalt our Minds to greater Purity and Holiness than the rest of Mankind, unless it engage us to renounce our Lusts, and mortify all our evil and corrupt Affections, and to be careful and solicitous to pay an uniform Obedience to all those Excellent Rules that it prescribes for the Guidance and Conduct of our Lives and Conversations; if it have not these good Effects, I say, upon us, God's great Mercy and Favour in giving us such a perfect Manifestation of his Will, nay, all that our Blessed Lord and Saviour has either done or suffer'd for us, is lost upon us; and a bare outward Profession of his Religion, without living in Conformity to it, will stand us in no Stead, either to procure his Favour here, or Admittance into his Kingdom of Glory hereafter; it will only serve to aggravate our Guilt and Misery, that we have sinn'd against such infinite Mercy, and despis'd that Salvation, which he purchas'd for us with the Price  
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of his own most Precious Blood. This he himself has plainly declared to us in the Words of my Text, and the Close of that Divine Sermon of his on the Mount, That an outward Profession of Christianity, without a faithful, sincere, universal and impartial Obedience to the Laws of the Gospel, will not avail any Man towards his Account at the last great Day; and that he, that builds any Hopes and Expectations of Heaven and Happiness upon it, acts as foolishly and imprudently, as he that builds his House upon the Sand; For, says he, *not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

In which Words we have Two Things of the nearest Concern to us, and of the highest Importance in the World, offer'd to our Consideration, viz.

First, *What is not a sufficient Foundation to build our Hopes of Salvation upon, and what Lengths we may go in Religion, and yet fail at last of Entering into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Secondly, *Upon what Grounds it is, that we may justly hope to be saved, and what it is that can alone give us a Right and Title to that Everlasting and Glorious Inheritance which God has promis'd,*



*mis'd, and which we pretend to expect, and to be aspiring after.*

The Former we have in the first Part of the Text, *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, &c.* The Latter in the following Words, *But he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.*

First, *We see what is not a sufficient Foundation for us to build our Hopes of Salvation upon, and what Lengths we may go, what Advances we may make in Religion, and yet fail at last of Entering into the Kingdom of Heaven.* It is not our saying, *Lord, Lord,* our owning Jesus Christ, and professing ourselves to be his Disciples, it is not any outward Performance of any material Acts of Duty, how necessary soever they may be in themselves, that will serve our Turn; nothing but an Holy Life conformable to the Laws of the Gospel, nothing but doing the Will of our Heavenly Father can give us a Right of Admittance into that Blissful Place.

In speaking to this Head, it will be necessary to consider more particularly what is imply'd in this Expression of saying, *Lord, Lord,* that knowing what Parts of Religion will in themselves be ineffectual to the procuring that End which we aim at, which is, to have our Souls eternally saved, and to be happy with God in another World, when

when Death shall remove us from this, we may be careful not to rest and satisfy ourselves with the Performance of them, but to study to *make our Calling and our Election sure*, to secure our Title to the *Everlasting Inheritance* by being fruitful in good Works, and leading such Holy and Innocent Lives as the Gospel requires, in Order to Salvation.

First, *The saying, Lord, Lord*, implies a Belief in Jesus Christ, owning him to be the Lord of Life and Glory; when we give an Assent to all the Truths of the Gospel, believe all that is there written of him, all the Miracles that he wrought for the evincing the Divine Authority of the Doctrines he taught, and the Dignity of his Person; all the Good that he did both to the Souls and Bodies of Men while he liv'd, and the great and inestimable Benefits that he purchas'd for us by his Death; in a Word, *the saying, Lord, Lord*, implies an Owning and Assenting to the Truth of the Christian Religion; which is the Foundation and Ground-Work of a Christian Life: For, he that wou'd live as a Christian, must believe in him whose Name he bears, and assent to the Truth and Equity of those Laws which he has prescrib'd to all his Followers, that Charter which he has given for the Well-governing of his Church, and all the



the Members of it, all that will be Enfranchis'd and incorporated into that Spiritual Society of which Christ himself is the Head. Now, though this Belief be absolutely necessary, and without which we cannot do any Thing acceptable unto God, *for, without Faith it is impossible to please Him*, yet, if this Faith reach no further than our Judgment and Apprehension, if it do not sink down into our Hearts, and bring them to that Conformity to the Divine Will, which the Gospel, the Rule of our Christian Faith, requires, if it do not give a Turn to our Wills and Affections, and transform us in some good Measure into the Image and Likeness of Christ, exciting us to live innocent, upright and holy Lives, to repent and forsake all our Sinful Practices, to cleave stedfastly to God, and to keep his Commandments; if our Faith have not these good Effects upon us, it will stand us in no Stead in that Day, when we shall be brought to give up our Accounts before the great Judge both of the Quick and the Dead; it will place us in no better Condition than that of the Devils, those Rebellious and Apostate Spirits, which believe in God, and tremble at the Apprehension of his Judgments, as well as we. *Thou believest that there is one God*, says St. James 2. 19. speaking

ing to those that thought that Faith without good Works wou'd justify them in the Sight of God) *Thou doest well, the Devils also believe, and tremble.* They acknowledge, to their Everlasting Woe and Confusion, That there is a God to punish eternally all those that rebel against him, and oppose his Will; and that they are never the nearer a Restitution to their former State for all this, but are reserv'd in Everlasting Chains under Darknes unto the Judgment of the great Day, Jude the Sixth Verse. Their Belief in God, and the perfect Knowledge they had of their Duty towards him, was an Aggravation of their Guilt in Rebelling against him, for which an irreversible Decree of Eternal Woe and Misery has pass'd upon them. It is not, therefore, believing in God, and knowing our Duty alone, that will do us any Service, for, as St. James tells us, Chap. 2. Ver. 20. *As the Body without the Spirit is dead, so Faith without Works, i. e.* that does not exert and manifest itself in doing the Will of God, *is dead also*: And, as it does not raise us to a Spiritual Life here, so it can give us no Right or Title to a Life of Bliss and Glory hereafter. The Saving-Faith, which has the Promise of Salvation, is not a bare superficial Belief of God, that swims in the Brain only, like the speculative Notions



tions and Conceptions of the Mind; but it is a practical Faith, that sinks down into the Heart of Man, and reforms there whatever it finds disagreeable to the Will of God, it is a Faith that works by Love, that puts the Christian upon performing a willing, a chearful, and uniform Obedience to all the Commandments and Injunctions of his Blessed Saviour.

Secondly, *The saying, Lord, Lord,* as it implies an Owning of Christ, and a Believing the Truth of his Religion, so it supposes an outward Profession of that Religion; when, being admitted by Baptism into the Fellowship of Christ's Disciples, receiv'd into the Communion of his Church, and listed under his Banner, a Man does not formally Renounce his Baptism, and openly Apostatize from the Faith of Christ, but continues to be called by that Blessed Name, and makes an external Profession of his being a Christian, continuing in outward and visible Communion with the Church of God. Now, tho this is a Duty of absolute and indispensable Necessity, to make an outward Profession of Religion, even when the Severest Persecutions, that the Malice of Satan, and the Tyranny of Men, can raise against it, attend such a publicly Owning and Professing the Truth, when, to own ourselves to be True Believers, is to expose ourselves,

selves, our Lives and Fortunes to Ruin and Destruction; tho', I say, an outward Profession of Religion, an Owning ourselves to be our Lord's Disciples, even in the midst of the Severest Persecutions, be a Duty necessary to Salvation yet it is not sufficient of itself, it is not all that God requires of us in Order to it. If there is not an inward Conformity in our Souls to the Divine Will, our outward Professions will be of little Service to us, while like those *whited Sepulchres*, to which our Blessed Saviour compar'd the Scribes and Pharisees, *Matth. 23. 27, 28.* which appear'd beautiful outwardly, *but within are full of Dead Mens Bones, and of all Uncleannefs*; tho' by our external Profession of Religion we appear righteous unto Men, yet within we are *full of Hypocrisy and Iniquity*. That Religion, which will be effectual to our Salvation, must be a loving and active Principle in our Souls, that influences and regulates all the Motions and Affections of our Hearts, that makes us love God above all Things, and disposes our Wills to a cheerful Compliance with whatever he is pleas'd to enjoin us; that sanctifies all our Thoughts, our Wishes, and Desires, and exerts itself in an habitual Practice of all Vertue and Holiness: Without this, our owning and professing



ourselves to be Christians, will be but a mocking of God, a prophaning that Holy Name by which we are call'd, it will be but a meer Shadow of that Religion which Christ came to establish in the World, void of that Life and Substance that it shou'd produce in the inward Man, to transform it into the Image and Resemblance of the Divine Purity and Holiness. So that, tho' to confess Christ and his Truth publicly in the World, be a Duty of such indispenfible Necessity, that the greatest Dangers, even Death itself, cannot excuse us from it; our Saviour having told us expressly, *Luke 12. 9* that *He that denies him before Men, shall be denied of him at the last Day before the Angels of God;* yet, there are other Qualifications no less necessary to make it acceptable to God, and effectual to the saving of our Souls: If it is not accompany'd with an habitual Care and Sollicitude to please God, to do his Will, and to keep his Commandments. Let us not deceive ourselves, it will stand us in little Stead, it will never gain us Admittance into the Kingdom of Heaven. That Noble Army of Martyrs and Confessors that are now encircling the Throne of God, owe not those bright Crowns of Glory that shine about their Heads wholly to their owning their Blessed Saviour

viour before their Persecutors; and laying down their Lives for his Sake; and for a Testimony to the Truth of his Religion; God did not so much respect the outward Act in those Instances of their Obedience, as the inward Principle of the Mind, which having over-rul'd all the Inclinations of their Nature which oppos'd the Will of God; and reduc'd them to an entire Resignation of themselves to his good Pleasure, made them prefer the doing his Will before the saving their Lives by denying him before Men, this is that which perfected their Obedience, and made it acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. If they had liv'd in Disobedience to his Commands, if they had not, in the Course and Tenour of their Lives, been careful to do the Will of their Heavenly Father in other Instances of Duty, that last Act of Obedience in owning him, and dying for his Name, wou'd have wanted its Efficacy. They might have given their Bodies to be burn'd, and yet have been profited nothing. 1 Cor. 13. 3. It was their Love to God; and their Desire to please him, and do his Will, that sanctify'd their Sufferings, and gave them an Entrance into the Kingdom of Glory; for, as it is not a bare believing in Christ; that will entitle Men to the Kingdom of Hea-



ven, so neither will a publick owning, professing, and dying for that Belief be of itself any more effectual to that End; nothing but an universal Obedience and doing the Will of our Heavenly Father can bring us into his Kingdom of Bliss and Glory.

*Thirdly,* The saying *Lord, Lord,* supposes not only a Faith in Christ, and an outward Profession of that Faith, but also an external Worshipping of God in the Holy Ordinances that he has appointed, in addressing ourselves to him in private and publick Prayer, and participating of the Blessed Sacrament; these are Duties so necessary, that an habitual Neglect of them in those that are guilty of it, is a virtual Renouncing of their Christianity; since they thereby declare in Effect, that tho' they were by Baptism admitted into the Body of Christ's Church, yet, they desire now to have no more to do with it, refusing to joyn in that Publick Worship of God, which is the Bond that unites that Spiritual Society together among themselves, and to Christ their Head. They rob God of that Honour that is due unto his Holy Name, while they refuse to acknowledge their Dependance upon him by putting up their Prayers unto him, either in Private, or

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in the Publick Assemblies of the Church, or to praise him, and magnify his Mercy and Bounty for all the good Things they enjoy. If there is any Thing that we want, or hope for, 'tis from his Goodness alone that we may expect to receive it; and, if we are possess'd of any Thing that is useful, convenient, or necessary for us, 'tis the same Infinite Goodness that has bestow'd it upon us; and since there is no Time, wherein we may not be sensible, either of something we want, or of something that we already enjoy from his Bounty, therefore, there can be no Time unseasonable for this Duty of addressing ourselves to God in Prayer, to own our Dependance upon him, and to laud and magnify his Glorious Name for all his Mercies and Loving-Kindness towards us: And as the Respect and Observance we pay to any of our Superiours is the greater, in the more Publick and Solemn Manner we perform it, so the Publick Worship of God in his Church reflects more Honour to God and Religion than the Service we pay him in private; because the Zeal and Concern we express for God's Honour, may influence others also, who, seeing our constant Attendance upon God in his Holy Ordinances, may, by our Example,



*A Profession word of the Practice of Christianity,*

be induc'd to do the same, and to glorify our Father which is in Heaven. He therefore that neglects to attend the Publick Worship and Service of God, robs God of the Honour due unto his Holy Name, brings a Disgrace upon his Religion, and by his ill Example lays a Stumbling Block before his weak Brother, who may thereby be brought to live in the same Neglect of his Duty, and Contempt of the Ordinances of God. But, tho' the attending upon, and bearing a Part in the Publick Worship and Service of God be a Duty so necessary, that he that lives in the Contempt or Neglect of it can hardly be reputed a Christian, yet at least, it is certain he can have no Right to the Privileges and Benefits of Christianity, yet this may be done, and he that performs it, may, nevertheless, for Want of other Qualifications, when he comes to have his Accounts audited at the Last Day, be deny'd an Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. He that comes here, and makes Confession of his Sins without forming effectual and prevalent Resolutions of forsaking them, he that comes to offer up unto God a few lifeless and heartless Devotions on the Lord's Day, and forgets God, or lives in the Contempt of his Laws and Commandments all the Week

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besides, will be able to make but a very sorry Account when he appears before the Dreadful Tribunal of the Great Judge of Heaven and Earth. He will not respect his outward Performances in that Day, or accept them in lieu of that Obedience to his Commandments which he requires, but will profess unto him, *I never knew thee, depart from me thou that work'st Iniquity.* Ver. 23.

Thus we have seen what is meant by the negative Part of my Text, *Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* We have seen what is not a sufficient Foundation for us to build our Hopes of Salvation upon, what Lengths we may go, what Advances we may make in Religion, and yet fail at last of entering into the Kingdom of Heaven. We may believe in Jesus Christ, and assent to the Truth of the Gospel, we may make an outward Profession of the True Religion, and perform an external Worship and Service of God both in publick and private, and yet, if we rest here in these external Duties of Religion, may fail of attaining to the End we aim at, *i. e.* to the Salvation of our Souls, and gaining Admittance into the Kingdom of Glory. We come now therefore to consider,



*A Profession said of the Practice of Christianity,*

*Secondly,* The positive Part of my Text, viz. upon what Grounds it is, that we may justly hope to be saved; what that is, that can alone give us a Right and Title to that Everlasting and Glorious Inheritance, which God has promis'd us, and which we pretend to expect, and to be aspiring after, and that is, the doing the *Will of our Father which is in Heaven*. Without this, if we live in Opposition to any one Commandment of God, if any one sinful Lust has so far the Pre-eminency in our Heart, that it prevails with us above the known Will of God, insomuch that we indulge ourselves in the Gratification of it, at the same Time that we know, and are assur'd, that God has expressly forbid us so to do: If this be the Case of any of us, we may be assur'd our Condition is very dangerous, our outward Profession of Religion will do us little Service, while we have *only the Form of Godliness, but deny the Power thereof.* 2 Tim. 3. 5. We thereby plainly intimate, and our own Consciences will convince us, that there is something that has a greater and more prevailing Interest in our Hearts than God, a more powerful Influence upon our Lives and Conversations; when we can bear the Gripes and Stings of our own Consciences, we can labour under

under the Sense of God's Displeasure for the Violation of his Laws, we dare run the Hazard of Eternal Damnation, and of being for ever excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven, rather than we will resolve to renounce and forsake it. When we live in the habitual Practice of any Thing that is contrary to the Will of God, when we indulge ourselves in a Habit of profane Cursing and Swearing, of breaking the Sabbath, which God has set apart and sanctified for his own Service, when we are unjust in our Dealings with Men, when we oppress our Neighbour, or bear Malice against him, or do any Thing unto him which we wou'd not he shou'd do unto us, if he were in our Circumstances, and we in his; in a Word, if we suffer any *Sin to reign in our mortal Body, so as to obey it in the Lusts thereof.* Let us not deceive ourselves, whatever our Pretensions may be to the contrary, we are not the Servants of God, but of Satan; for *his Servants we are to whom we obey,* his, whose Will gives the Law to our Actions, whose Motions and Suggestions we receive and comply with, in Opposition to the Commandments of God: He is our chief Master to whom we have given up the Sovereign Power and Dominion over us, and



*A Profession void of the Practice of Christianity,*

and rather than we will renounce his Service we choose to reject God's Authority over us, in despising his Laws, and violating the Commandments which he has set before us. And what, think we, will be the Result and Issue of this, of transferring that Duty and Allegiance which we owe to the great Governour of Heaven, from him, to his and our greatest Enemies, to Satan and our own sinful Lusts, letting them have the most prevailing Influence over us, and obeying them in Opposition to the Will of God, which every one does, that indulges himself in the Practice of any one known Sin; what, think we, I say, will be the End and Consequence of this, but that, when we come to give up our Accounts before the Judgment-Seat of the now despis'd Son of God, we shou'd be disown'd, and finally rejected by him, excluded for ever from his Presence, and cast into that Everlasting Fire provided for the Devil and his Angels, and all such miserable and wretched Souls as rebel against God, and will not submit to those Laws, which he has set before them. It will little avail us in that Day to say unto him, "Lord, Lord, " Have we not believ'd in thee, and own'd " thee to be our Lord and Saviour? have " we not made a publick Profession of thy  
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*cannot give us any Hopes of Salvation.*

“ Religion ? have we not liv’d in outward  
“ Communion with thy Church, and fre-  
“ quented thy Holy Ordinances ? Will not  
“ these atone for the Breach of thy Com-  
“ mandments, the Violation of thy Right-  
“ eous Laws ? Will not this cover the  
“ internal Impurities of our Hearts, and  
“ take off the Guilt of those many unmor-  
“ tified and unrepented Sins that we have  
“ committed ? ” No, he has left no Room  
for such presumptuous Thoughts, he has  
told us what we are to expect before-hand,  
*Depart from me all ye Workers of Iniquity.*  
“ I purchased Grace and Salvation for you  
“ with the Price of my own Blood, but  
“ you despis’d and rejected it ; I shew’d  
“ you the Way that leads to Everlasting  
“ Life, and I appointed Ministers in my  
“ Church to exhort you in my Name to  
“ walk in it, and gave the Assistances of  
“ the Holy Spirit to all that wou’d receive  
“ them, sufficient to enable them to work  
“ out their Salvation, you have stopped  
“ your Ears, and hardned your Hearts  
“ against the many Invitations and Entrea-  
“ ties that were made you to forsake your  
“ evil Ways, and turn unto me, that you  
“ might now have been meet to be Par-  
“ takers with the Children of Light, to  
“ have taken Possession of that Glorious In-  
“ heritance, that Heavenly Kingdom that  
“ I



*A Profession void of the Practice of Christianity,*

“ I purchas’d for you, but you wou’d not  
“ hearken to me then, and now it is too  
“ late; *Depart from me ye Workers of Iniqui-*  
“ *ty; and reap the Fruits of your Disobe-*  
“ *dience in that Fire, where the Worm dy-*  
“ *eth not, and the Fire is not quench’d.* You  
“ might have been admitted into my Hea-  
“ venly Kingdom, and been Partakers of my  
“ Glory, among the *Cherubim and Seraphim,*  
“ *Angels, Principalities and Powers,* and  
“ the glorified Spirits of Saints and Mar-  
“ tyrs, and Confessors, and there have been  
“ unspeakably happy for evermore, but now  
“ there is no Entrance for you into that  
“ Blissful Place; Hell is the Place appointed  
“ for your Reception, where Weeping, and  
“ Wailing, and Gnashing of Teeth shall be  
“ your miserable Entertainment to all Eter-  
“ nity.”

And Oh! May this most important Con-  
sideration sink deep into all our Hearts, that  
we may be careful not to deceive ourselves  
by resting in the outward Profession of Chris-  
tianity, in the Performance of the external  
Duties of Religion, which though necessary,  
yet are not of themselves sufficient to pro-  
cure for us an Entrance into the Kingdom of  
Heaven. Nothing can effect this, but such  
a Frame and Temper of Soul, as disposes us  
in all Things to do the Will of God and  
keep his Commandments; and if we want  
this,

*cannot give us any Hopes of Salvation.*

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this, if we live in the Neglect or Contempt of any of his Righteous Laws, our owning Christ, professing ourselves to be his Disciples, and frequenting his Ordinances, will stand us in no Stead, we have only the Shadow, we have nothing of the Substance of that Religion, which we pretend to : And unless our Consciences can testify to us, that through the Grace of God, our Hearts are sanctified, our Natures reform'd, our Lusts mortified and subdued, that we may hate Sin, and delight to do the Will of our Heavenly Father, we cannot entertain any Hope of Salvation, there is no other Foundation to ground our Expectations of Heaven and Happiness upon, our Blessed Saviour having assur'd us here in my Text, *That not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the Will of his Heavenly Father ; And Ver. 26, 27. That every one that heareth his Sayings, and doth them not, is like to a foolish Man who built his House on the Sand, and the Rain descended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon that House, and it fell, and great was the Fall of it. Let us therefore take Care not to be Hearers of his Word only, but Doers also ; let it sink deep into our Hearts, and let our Wills and Affections submit to it, and be guided and directed by it in all Things : And, if we are faithful unto him*



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in doing his Will, and keeping his Commandments, he will be faithful to his Promises, he will protect us here, and reward us hereafter, he will admit us into his Heavenly Kingdom, where we shall behold his Glory, and be happy in the Blissful Society of Saints and Angels for evermore.

And, tho' we may find some Difficulty in managing successfully this great Affair, in resisting Temptations, in mortifying our Lusts, and over-ruling all the irregular Motions and Inclinations of our corrupt and degenerate Nature, yet consider, my Brethren, we have a Prize set before us, which will abundantly countervail all the Trouble we can be at in attaining it; a Prize, for which the Holy Martyrs were content to shed their Blood, and which the Blessed Saints in Glory thought not too dearly purchas'd, when they parted with the World and all its Delights and sensual Satisfaction to obtain it. How many anxious Cares, how many weary Steps, what infinite Pains and Disquiet are we content to bestow, rising up early, and late taking Rest, and denying ourselves many Things that we may seem to stand in Need of; and all this in Order, neither to procure or preserve a temporal Estate, which is so uncertain, and at best but of a few Days Continuance? And, are not all those great Things that

lye

*cannot give us any Hopes of Salvation*

lye on the other Side of Death, lie in Heaven and Eternity, a never-fading Crown of Glory, and an everlasting Inheritance worth the Aspiring after with the same Care and Industry? Can we think that these Things can cost us too much; or, that they will not abundantly compensate all the Care and Concern, all the Pains we do, or can take to make our Calling and Election sure, to secure our Title and Interest in that Happiness? No certainly. And therefore, let us betimes, and in good Earnest, endeavour to dispossess our Minds of all those Delusions, wherewith the World, the Flesh, and the Devil would obstruct our Care of this great Work of *working out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, and to have Eternity, and all the dismal Consequences of it so deeply and thoroughly engraven upon our Souls, that we may be ever effectually preparing for those great Occurrences, by a stedfast Perseverance and patient Continuance in doing the Will of God, and keeping his Commandments, that when these our *earthly Tabernacles shall be dissolv'd*, and we have happily escap'd all the Dangers and Hazards, all the Afflictions, and Troubles, and Temptations of this transitory World, we may at last arrive safely at that Kingdom that cannot be shaken, and be made Partakers of that  
In-



*Confession void of the Practice of Christianity, &c.*

Heritage incorruptible, undefiled, and that  
fadeth not away, reserv'd in Heaven for



*FINIS.*

